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Mrs. McCook's Cottage.

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CHUMBO'S HUT;

OR, THE

LAGUNA SCHOOL.

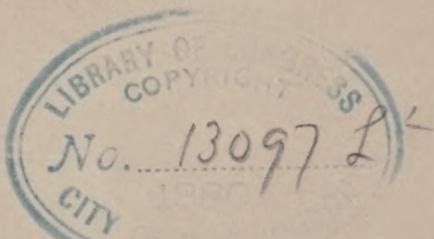
BY

MRS. MARGARET HOSMER,

AUTHOR OF

"THE CHINAMAN IN CALIFORNIA," "THE BACK COURT,"
"CHILD CAPTIVES," ETC. ETC.

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CHUMBO'S HUT.

CHAPTER I.

"THE WORST BOY."

"Let us not be weary in well-doing, for in due season we shall reap if we faint not."—GAL. vi. 9.

"THIS is your school-room, Miss Herbert," said Mr. Weston, the principal, to me as he introduced me to the scene of my future labors; and he added, in an undertone, looking toward a lad who had just cuffed another one at his side, "There is your worst boy."

The youth's flushed face grew redder still, and his sullen brow scowled angrily at us both. His hearing was keen, and he resented the remark with a muttered growl.

"There, Batters, none of that!" said Mr. Weston sternly; and then turning he said

to me, "This boy is evidently inclined to give you trouble. If he attempts any nonsense, just send him in to my room to be settled; will you, please?"

I did not say "Yes;" the thought struck me that it was not the best thing to say, and, following the impulse of my mind, I looked at the boy as kindly as I could, and replied, "I am sure he would not give me trouble if he knew how anxious I am to be his friend. I mean to tell him so, and see if I cannot rely on his trying to be the best boy in my class, as he is the largest."

Batters relaxed his frowning brow a very little at this, and seemed to transfer all the wrathful feeling to Mr. Weston which he had at first been inclined to share with me. He made a disagreeable sound without uttering any words, and shook his head once or twice as if in protest against the principal's presence. But Mr. Weston, without paying any further attention to him, went on to speak to me about the class. So he received no further provocation, and consequently subsided into a listless stare during the rest of the interview.

The Laguna School, as it was called, because it was built in the valley near a little *laguna* (lake) inlet from the beautiful San Francisco Bay, was one of those institutions described by the term *unclassified*, and in my room I found scholars varying in age from six to sixteen.

This was unavoidable, owing to the scattering suburban population around, which could not number sufficient scholars to admit of the regular division of grammar, intermediate and primary school. There were but two classes, that of the principal and my own, but these were divided into a dozen grades, from the child in the alphabet to the student in geometry. It was consequently quite laborious to superintend such a variety of studies and keep order at the same time among so many children of different ages.

Mr. Weston had been struggling against the difficulties of the position for some years. The attendance was too unreliable to admit of great advancement in any of the pupils, and the contrast in the homes and social standing of the parents seemed

to prevent a unity of feeling in anything he attempted by way of improvement.

Around the laguna were some beautiful suburban villas belonging to men of wealth, whose sons attended the school, and among the sandhills were tule huts, where idle Spanish fishermen lounged away the time, and sent their dark-faced, mischievous little boys to mingle with the children of the Irish laborers who worked on the road to the Presidio, and were far too ready to drink and fight and set a bad example to the rising generation. Mr. Weston had, as he told me, taken charge of the Laguna School with the firm determination of reforming all the evils of the neighborhood, and, having brought out the better qualities of the youth under his charge, to constitute them an active band of home-missionaries to counteract the bad habits of their elders.

He had not succeeded, and felt so dissatisfied with the disheartening result of his labors that his manner suffered somewhat from the disappointment, and at times he was severe and impatient.

“I am sorry, Miss Herbert, that I cannot

encourage you," he said, after telling me of the barriers in the way of establishing a wise rule and good influences. "I tried to hope against hope for a long time, but I was forced at last to acknowledge that human nature cannot be changed by art, and that we must be content to check temporarily the progress of evil where we cannot eradicate it. Every day I take six hours from the time that would otherwise be devoted to all sorts of mischief, if not crime, and hold my class in outward subjection to better things. But of course I know that my influence is at an end just the moment they leave my sight, and that outside the school-room any one of my boys might defy me if he chose."

"But are they all so very bad?" I asked, hesitating to believe such a discouraging account of my future scholars.

"No, certainly, not all, but by far the greater proportion. A short experience will prove to you that a bad boy can do more mischief than a dozen good ones can counteract. That boy Batters of yours, for instance, will give you more uneasiness than

those three families of nice children—the Morleys, the Hunters and the Norrises—can give you pleasure. Then those Surano and Silvio lads, sons of the Spanish fishers, are terribly unmanageable. Miss Gordon, your predecessor, used to punish them three and four times a day. But they wax their hands, and don't mind the ferule at all."

Mr. Weston was a hard worker, and conscientiously devoted to the interests of the school, though he had no hope of making it a success. It was this labor without encouragement that affected his spirits. He was not in good health, either, and I tried to take everything into consideration to preserve my own hopefulness after he had given me such a depressing introduction to my new sphere.

I found seventy names on my roll-book, and not quite forty boys and girls present. The absent-marks during the last term showed just about the same average, and proved the truth of one item of Mr. Weston's complaint—a poor attendance. I looked over the rows of desks and benches, and saw that another was equally correct. A portion of the pupils were neatly dressed and bore evidence of

home care and cultivation; the rest were in various stages of raggedness and dirt, and looked as wild and unprepossessing as any children I had ever beheld.

But the behavior did not correspond with the exterior of these young people in every instance. Some of the untidy children seemed particularly good, and some of the genteel ones were very unruly. None of them were so positively degraded as the one Mr. Weston had called "Batters." He was hopelessly neglected in appearance, and in face and form presented nothing attractive or comely. But the spirit of mischief and perversity with which he seemed possessed was even more remarkable than his want of personal graces, and during the first morning of my life at the laguna he caused me more discomfort and uneasiness than I should have believed it possible for one boy to create.

The first impression I gained from watching him secretly for a few moments was, that he had made up his mind never to sit still himself nor allow any one else to do so if he could prevent it. Then it appeared that he had an angry feeling against every boy in

the school, and that, as a general thing, they returned it with interest.

He would drive his elbow into one, put out his foot to trip another and snatch a book or slate from a third, all in the same moment, and apparently without any temptation except a desire to make disorder.

I had rather expected that he would have banded himself with the poorer part of the scholars against the sons of rich parents, but I discovered that he bestowed his kicks and cuffs quite impartially, only he seemed to hold a particular spite against the Spanish boys.

Mr. Weston called him "Batters," but I found out that this was a nickname, and one that gave him great offence.

After the noon-recess the principal came in to complain of some one of my boys having thrown a stone into his window.

"I looked out the moment after," said he, "and I could see no one near but Samuel McCook and Batters. So I report them both to you, Miss Herbert. The boys know that such an act is a breach of school-rules, and when you have investigated the matter the offender must be punished."

I had been trying to get on with as little reproof as possible until I had learned more of the natures I had to govern, and the necessity of examining and detecting an offender so soon quite frightened me.

Mr. Weston went back to his room, and I called up the two boys.

Samuel was a small, lame lad, with truthful eyes and a frank, agreeable smile. His face prepossessed me in his favor, and I asked him to tell me the truth about the matter, because I felt that he would not attempt to deceive me.

But, to my surprise, his face grew red and he hung back in a manner that did not seem cowardly, and yet was anything but open and honest, like his face.

When I insisted on his speaking out he colored still more deeply, and said he didn't want to be a tale-bearer—that there were other boys there besides Batters and himself.

“You stop calling me Batters, will you?” growled the other angrily. “I told you before I would knock your head off if you said it again.”

“What is your name?” I asked mildly.

"My name is James Finney, and the boys call me Batters because I have to fight for my rights."

"Well, James, then I ask you to tell me about the stone that was thrown into the principal's room."

"I wish it had hit him," muttered James; and this was all the reply I received.

"Teacher," said a little boy on the last row of seats, jumping up and holding up his hand for permission to speak, "I know what was the matter. Batters shies rocks at boys if they throw their balls or shinney stones into his garden, and Ned Morley's ball knocked his flowers off; that is what made him want to hit him."

"Where is James's garden?"

The boys laughed, and James's red face flamed with angry color.

"It is none of their business," he growled. "They have room enough to play without breaking up my things."

I looked at Edward Morley, who had not said a word, but appeared to become suddenly busied over his studies since the conversation began.

"As far as I understand it, you were playing ball, Edward," said I, "and your ball chanced to fall among James Finney's flowers and break one of them. This made him angry, so that he threw a stone at you which chanced to go into Mr. Weston's window."

"Yes, ma'am," confessed Edward, rather reluctantly; and he added, "If he had hit me he might have killed me. It was a sharp piece of rock he threw." He evidently wanted to lose sight of the provocation and magnify James's offence.

"Then you had nothing to do with it, Samuel?"

"No, ma'am," cried the little boy, much relieved.

But I knew by his manner that he had seen it all, and I determined to talk to him about it by and by.

I felt I was doing a risky thing when I said, "Go back to your seats, boys; I will attend to this another time. I want to become better acquainted with your good qualities before I find out the wrong things you do."

They took this merciful settlement of the

difficulty in different spirits. The Morley boys appeared rather disappointed, and little Samuel seemed very glad. As for James Finney, he was such a morose sort of fellow that no one could trace a pleasant emotion on his habitually threatening brow.

There were plenty of attentive scholars who seemed to take an interest in their lessons and to desire improvement. There were some too who never misbehaved in any way. But, as Mr. Weston had just said, the noisy, troublesome, lawless few were able to keep up such a ferment and create such a disturbance that I found at the close of my first day at the Laguna School that James Finney had given me more annoyance and created more trouble for me than I had ever had a pupil do before, and that, anxious as I felt to avoid the system of reproach and complaint under which he had lived heretofore, I found it difficult to refrain from relieving my tried mind in that way.

About a dozen of the forty-four scholars present had merited reproof for misconduct, but not more than half of that number were systematically bad. I had watched them

closely, and saw that besides Batters my most difficult subject was a handsome, well-dressed youth named Egbert Hyde. His father was colonel at the Presidio. In right of his military distinction he evidently enjoyed some popularity among the other boys, who never “told on him,” but bore his tricks very patiently. He was sly and not at all frank or honorable in his conduct, as I had reason to conclude when I saw him endeavor to throw the blame of any unusually loud noise his pranks created upon other and less popular boys.

Edward Morley sat at his side, and seemed a very particular friend of his, and given to imitating his ways, I feared.

Terry Law was a square-shouldered, thick-set lad, with a face that expressed decided energy and superior intelligence. He belonged to the laboring classes, but his poor clothes were cleaner and better kept than most of the boys of his order, and I thought for the first hour of our acquaintance that he was a lad in whom I should find interest and pleasure. But I soon discovered that he was a leader of a band, and that he had di-

vided his part of the school into a faction against the "aristocrats," or children of the wealthier residents of the Laguna. He and two or three of his strongest supporters kept up a defensive and sometimes an aggressive air toward Egbert Hyde and his associates, and Batters and the Spanish boys made guerrilla war on all parties as occasion offered.

This was the reason of the ill-success of the school. I felt I had found out the trouble, but I really did not know how to overcome it.

I sat thinking after they were all dismissed, and the case seemed a very difficult one.

Samuel McCook was lingering at the door, as if he wished to speak to me. I smiled at him encouragingly, and he came forward.

"The boys are all gone, and you can see Batters's garden now, Miss Herbert," he said, nodding his head in the direction of the playground.

I had just concluded in my own mind, "Batters seems the hardest to win over; I will try him first;" and Samuel's words timed well with my thoughts. I rose very readily, and went with him to the playground.

CHAPTER II.

THE FINNEYS.

"Let your moderation be known unto all."—PHIL. iv. 6.

IT was a large, bare space covered with rings and hollows, marks of marble- and ball-games played energetically by the many sets of boys I had observed there that morning. In a corner, under the shadow of the wall and beside a small gutter or outlet from the water-tank, was a little triangular spot bordered with pebbles and partly surrounded by bits of dry twigs stuck fencewise in the earth. In this compartment were two or three weedy-looking plants and a small tuft of red daisies. They were abundantly watered. Indeed, their sickly appearance was due to the excess of moisture and shade, but it was evident that their planter took great pride in their culture, and I could

scarcely imagine such a boy as Batters being fond of flowers.

"Are you sure this is James Finney's work?" I asked.

"Yes, ma'am. His sister Kitty would not let him have a garden at home, because they keep chickens and turkeys; so he planted them here, and the boys knock the sticks down with their balls and shinney-clubs, and then he fights them."

The love of flowers had always seemed to me a softening and refining influence, but in the case of this perverted lad it appeared to be the occasion of conflict and disagreement.

I felt afraid that the boys purposely trespassed on his flower-plot, and I said so; but Samuel was no talebearer or mischief-maker.

"A ball will sometimes go the wrong way," he said, "and when so many boys are at play they never stop to think about people's flowers."

Without infringing on the good rule my little friend had evidently adopted of speaking evil of no one, I questioned him about James's relations with the other boys, and

tried to discover why he seemed to stand alone and be at war with every one.

“Has the poor lad no friend at all among you?”

“Oh yes; he likes Frank Blaine.”

I repeated the name, and tried to remember the boy to whom it belonged. But Samuel said he had not been at school that day.

“His father is a sea-captain, and Frank is sick most of the time; so this voyage he took Frank down to Mexico, to see if it would make him better.”

“Is he a large boy?

“Not very. Once he went off with Batters in a little boat, and they were nearly drowned. Ever since then Frank and he have been friends, and when he is here the boys don’t tease Batters so much.”

Here were two good points in the character of my “worst boy:” he loved flowers, and he was capable of feeling an attachment and awakening a friendship in another. I was glad to make the discovery, and, finding that Samuel McCook’s home lay on the road I meant to take, we left the school together, talking very pleasantly.

Though lame, Samuel was exceedingly nimble in his movements; the light crutch on which he leaned seemed part of himself, he used it so readily, and his cheerful young face and active form prevented one from calling his accident an affliction.

It had happened two years ago, he told me, and was owing to a fall from one of the highest trees in the school-yard.

“Miss Warren was our teacher then,” he said, “and she told us we must not climb the branches, because it was dangerous, and also that it was wicked to disturb the birds which were building nests there. Two other boys and I waited after school till she went away. Then we scrambled up, and got two pretty nests. But I fell as I was trying to come down, and the boys were frightened and ran off and left me lying there. Chumbo, the Indian, heard me cry.—You know Chumbo, Miss Herbert, don’t you? He lives in the tule hut near the laguna, and comes round the playground at night to pick up crumbs and bits of the boys’ lunches.—He lifted me up and carried me home, and I had to lie in bed for months. Miss Warren came to see

me, and never scolded me once; so did Mr. Harris, the minister; and everybody was so kind to me that I can never forget it. The doctors say I will outgrow the hurt, but I am so used to it that I do not mind it much now."

We had reached the rising ground that bounded the valley of the laguna, and came in sight of a miserable shanty or two with scattering sheds around them. A good many dirty children were building mud forts at the side of the road, and a variety of animals were straying around the premises.

"That is Finney's house," said my young companion, "and Billy McBride lives in the other one."

Just as I learned this I saw a very untidy woman come to the door and begin screaming at the children, more in general severity than any particular anger.

"What do you mean, you dirty, lazy, idle young villains," she cried, "digging and slopping in the dirt from morning till night, till my arms ache trying to wash your clothes? If you don't leave that mud and

mess this minute, I will break every bone in your bodies."

"That is Mrs. Finney," said Samuel in an under-tone; and she advanced to greet me, having scattered the fort-builders to the right and left.

"This is the new teacher, isn't it?" she said with what she meant for a pleasant manner. "I am glad to see you, ma'am, and I hope you will do better for us than the ones we had before. There's my Jim; he has been going to the Laguna School for over five years, and he knows just nothing at all this minute. To be sure, he is too bad to learn anything; it seems as if he is bent on evil and will learn nothing else; but that is not our fault. I am sure his father has done his best, and so have I. We have whipped him every day of his life, till we couldn't stand over him any longer, and it has done him no good. He has had more thrashings than any boy of his age you can name, and yet he is so troublesome and vicious that we do not know what to do with him."

As she spoke James appeared in the side-

yard chasing some turkeys, and before I had time to answer her she caught up a stick and rushed after him, crying out as she went,

“Oh, you vagabond! I will take your very life if you hurt one of my turkeys!”

Kitty Finney now came forward; she was a well-grown girl of fourteen or fifteen, with a rather good face, but a bold, forward manner.

She had been engaged in wiping dishes, for she held a plate and cloth in her hand still, and seemed divided between anger and amusement on the subject of the chase her brother and mother were having.

“If you are our Jim’s teacher, I pity you,” she said, addressing me; “he is enough to set any one crazy. Whenever I say a word to him he starts off and chases our turkeys, because father lets me have all the money I can get by selling the young ones. Look at him now. He has jumped over the wall, and stands dancing and yelling at mother where he knows she cannot reach him. Ha, ha, ha! Oh, he is smart enough when he wants to be, I tell you!”

"Are you his only sister?" I asked.

"No, indeed. There are Nelly and Jane playing in the mud there; and the two boys fighting with that old goat that has the kid are my brothers too. We had a baby, but he got scalded in the suds when mother took in washing, so he died."

"You have a father living?" I ventured to ask, for I remembered Mrs. Finney's allusion to him in the matter of discipline, and I wondered what could be the occupation of the head of such a family.

"Of course we have," said Kitty, sharply and with an air of some resentment. "I suppose you think because we are so poorly situated that we haven't even got relations. But my pa knows what he is about. He has a title to all this property round here, and when he can get enough money to fee the lawyers he is going to have these stuck-up quality, that turn their noses up at us now, marched off the place. The Morleys and the Harrises live on ground my father can claim as soon as he is able to go to law about it. Then we will see who will call us 'the poor Finneys.'"

She tossed her head and began polishing the plate which she held in her hand. Her foolish words and affected tone did not prejudice me against her. I thought I could see in the knot of soiled red ribbon she had stuck in the side of her hair, and the necklace of cheap blue beads she wore round her neck, that she was fond of showy things, and wanted to be rich so as to gratify her gay tastes. Though she was much better-looking than her brother, there was a strong likeness between them, and the peculiarly resentful expression in his eyes was repeated in hers, as if they both agreed in being angry and bitter against those whom they considered better off than themselves.

Mrs. Finney, finding she could not reach her disrespectful son, flung the stick at him, and, not being able to hit him with it, followed it with a few lumps of clay, which were equally unsuccessful. Then she came back with a flushed and excited face to appeal to me if he was not enough to drive her distracted and bring her to the grave in sorrow.

“ I am glad you saw how we are treated

by him, and how hard we try to make him act right," she said. "Some of the teachers have come here complaining to us, as if we were not more to be pitied than they were! But you can see for yourself what a trial he is to us."

I said I was very sorry, but perhaps he would do better if they changed the style of managing him, and suggested that it was possible to scold and beat a boy too much.

She seemed greatly surprised at such an idea, and asked what I would do with him if I didn't beat him.

"Could you not try persuasion and kindness?" I hinted, but she laughed outright at the suggestion.

"When it takes us all, fighting him with might and main, to keep him fit to live with, what would he be if we all let him alone to take his own way?" she exclaimed.

I was afraid I could not explain my meaning clearly just then, for Mrs. Finney was in no mood to understand the law of love; so I said "Good-evening," and went away.

Samuel McCook had left me when he saw James's mother appear. He seemed rather

anxious to avoid an interview with the family; and I understood the reason for it when I heard Kitty call after him, "Don't stay 'round our place, Sam McCook. You might get some dust on your clothes, and then your mother would have to sit up all night to brush them clean."

The pretty cottage in which he lived stood just on the other side of the wild and disordered space in which the Finneys' and the McBrides' shanties were, and I never saw a neater, prettier spot than the lovely little garden that surrounded it. Mrs. McCook was busily trimming her plants, and her son had laid away his satchel and was helping her as I came up. She had just reached a beautiful cluster of fuchsias down by the gate, and discovered that the handsomest was torn up by the roots.

"Oh, Sammy," she cried, "your beautiful variegated fuchsia is ruined!"

Samuel was just about to introduce me to his mother when she, unconscious of my presence at her gate, imparted this sad intelligence. His face showed in a moment how keenly he felt the loss of his favorite flower,

but he called to me to please to stop, and opened the gate:

“Mother, this is our new teacher, Miss Herbert, and I wanted her to see our pretty flowers; but the prettiest of all was this splendid fuchsia, that is all torn up.”

Mrs. McCook was a widow, a neat, pleasant-faced person, with a cheerful manner and a sweet voice. After saying a word or two to me about the school and inviting me to walk in, she turned consolingly to her boy.

“I am so sorry, Sammy!” she said; “and I think it was my fault, for I made James Finney angry this morning by scolding him for driving their chickens into our garden. He said he did not do it, and I told him you had seen him at it often. Then he called you a telltale, and said he would soon make you sorry for talking against him. Just as I came out, about a quarter of an hour ago, I found him hanging over the paling at the side where your fuchsia was. When he saw me he jumped down and ran off, hooting and yelling, as he does after any particularly annoying bit of mischief he commits.”

“Oh, how mean!” said the poor fellow,

half inclined to cry as he bent over his ruined flower.

"Never mind, Sammy dear," said his mother cheerfully. "There is one exactly like it in a pot in the Frenchman's nursery; I will buy it for you to-morrow. Do not say a word of reproach to James; it will only make bad worse."

She gave Samuel her scissors, and, adjusting her garden-hat, stepped out into the road with me, saying that she would walk to the florist's corner, from which she could show me a path that would shorten my walk to the city.

As we went on she said, "I suppose you know something of James Finney, or, as the neighbors call him, 'Batters'? Every one looks on him as the pest and terror of the Laguna, and I really dread to have him take a spite against Sammy, for I do not believe he would stop at any act, however bold or wicked. It is a great relief to me to know that his anger against him took such a simple form as the destruction of his flower; and I shall feel very uncomfortable until I have my boy's promise not to reproach him with

it, lest he does him a much more serious injury."

"Is he then so very lawless and revengeful?" I asked, feeling quite alarmed at the increasing developments concerning Batters's evil ways.

"I may do him injustice," said Mrs. McCook—"and Sammy, who is a kind-hearted child, tender and forgiving to everybody, says that I do—but I think him the most daring and relentless young savage I ever saw. If Mr. Finney could be persuaded to send him to sea on a whaler, it would be a wonderful relief to the neighborhood."

We had reached the florist's corner; Mrs. McCook showed me the short cut through a little ravine between the sandhills, and I bade her good-afternoon and hurried homeward after my first day at the Laguna School, feeling rather doubtful of my future success unless I could conquer the "worst boy," and deeply impressed with the difficulty of such an effort.

CHAPTER III.

JAMES'S FLOWER.

“Be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another.”—EPH. iv. 32.

WHEN I passed the Finneys' corner next morning the turkeys were strutting peacefully around the untidy yard, and James, the disturber of the family peace, was nowhere in sight.

William McBride was starting to school with his satchel over his shoulder and a new ball in his hand. He did not see me, but ran off with an alacrity that had more reference to the playground than to study.

I did not blame the boys for being fond of amusement. The school-yard was particularly well suited to games of all kinds, and very attractive to such lads as William, whose own playground at home offered few inducements. I was wondering within myself as to whether a teacher situated as I was had not better

become interested in the play-hours and home-pursuits of her pupils if she meant to establish a permanent influence over them, when I was overtaken by a most peculiar and rather intimidating figure.

It was a short man with a red skin and long black hair. His features were flat and his expression stupid, except when he was roused to notice anything. Across his forehead and down his cheeks he wore streaks of black and red paint, which gave him a ferocious appearance. Besides some tattered remnants of American clothing he had a red blanket, with his head thrust through a hole in the middle, and two or three hats, stuck on top of one another, on his head. The uppermost one had a great variety of feathers placed in the band, that nodded and waved in a ridiculous manner as he walked. In his hand he carried a long straight stick, with which he poked the ground.

He grunted at me in a queer way, and stood still, regarding me with a look of curiosity that gave animation to his dull face.

“Me good Indian,” he said with a series of grunts. “Where you come from?”

I pointed to the school-house, which we were approaching, and told him I was the teacher.

“Bad boys,” he said, shaking his head energetically—“all bad boys.”

I had no doubt that they had teased and troubled him, and was equally sure that they were much to blame for doing so. I told him this, but said I did not believe they were all bad.

“No,” said the Indian, showing his white teeth in a broad smile; “Sam good boy; me like Sam. Sam give me this.”

He lifted his blanket and displayed a string of large glass beads suspended from his neck, which he seemed to consider a great treasure.

“Do you like no other boy except Sam?” I asked.

“Me like Batters,” he answered very unexpectedly; “he good boy too—very good.”

I could scarcely account for this tribute to James's character; I should have supposed him to be among the most troublesome of old Chumbo's enemies. But the Indian

caught up some clay and pebbles, and, throwing them into the air, flourished his stick around, and gave me to understand that Batters defended him in this manner from the assaults of the other boys, and drove them off when they attacked him. He then produced two large shells that he had been polishing, and entrusted them to me as presents to his favorites. He showed me that they came from the ocean-beach by pointing over the hills toward the seashore; and after a good deal of mumbling that I could not understand went by a side-path over to the shore of the laguna, where his hut stood.

When I entered the playground the boys were shouting and rushing about, each intent on his game. Seeing that they paid no attention to me, but continued their sports noisily, I stopped to observe their different ways.

It was, as I had thought the day before, a struggle between factions that injured the order of our school. Egbert Hyde and Edward Morley rallied round them the arger and better-looking class of boys,

Terence Law headed the poorer party, while the Spanish boys and James Finney depredated on either side in turn, and kept up a perfect turmoil all through the games.

James had evidently just arrived on the ground, and as he passed up the yard he used his feet to kick every boy's ball he could reach, and in this way created all the anger and trouble possible.

I was directly behind him, and saw that he went at once to his little garden-plot near the tank to discover and punish any encroachment. He stood still, and something in his attitude bespoke astonishment not unmixed with pleasure.

Coming close to his side, I discovered its meaning. A beautiful scarlet fuchsia with white and purple petals was growing in its midst, with a pretty framework for it to lean against.

“Who put that there?” said James, seeming to speak to himself rather than address the other boys. Then he said, “It is beautiful, and I will take care of it too. I would like to see any one dare to touch it, so I would.”

He looked around, breathing defiance, and yet he was both surprised and pleased. He had never learned to express his feelings pleasantly, and anger at the possibility of interference came more readily than gratitude for the unexpected present.

When I had entered the school-room and laid aside my hat and shawl I went to the window, and saw James Finney, unconscious of anything around him, stooping admiringly over his new flower, while the balls were bouncing over his head and the boys were jostling against him.

I was more touched by this little incident than I could easily account for. It involved a higher, holier principle than I had seen displayed in any school-discipline I had studied. This practical return of good for evil opened a new train of thought to my mind, and mechanically I turned over the leaves of the New Testament that lay on the desk at my side, while the thought flashed upon me, "This book, that teaches so much, may guide me in the sincere and earnest desire of my heart to do my duty and improve these dear children."

Involuntarily my heart lifted itself in fervent prayer, and I besought divine help in the task that till that moment had seemed one in which perseverance and firm discipline alone were necessary.

It might have been fancy on my part, but the play progressed outside with much less turmoil than on the day before; and when I rang the bell the boys came in without tumbling over each other; which was owing to James Finney's remaining till the last, in place of driving ahead and thrusting all the rest forward.

Terry Law was breathless and good-humored; he came in followed by his body-guard of adherents, all equally cheerful. But Juan Surano ran before one of them in his effort to reach his seat in time to prevent Jose Silvio from seizing it, and thereby caused a momentary breach in the good order. Billy McBride, who was the boy in front, seized him by the arm and pushed him over into an empty seat.

“William McBride, please go back and help Juan to get up again,” I said; but, as I expected, he stood still and refused to obey.

He had been used to sharp words, and the action of the ferule by way of emphasis; for when I came toward him I saw him quail and throw up his arm, as if in expectation of a blow. I only laid my hand on his shoulder gently and said as kindly as I could, "Then I will help him up, and show you how much easier it is to be polite to each other than rude and cross."

I raised Juan with one hand, while I still held Billy with the other.

"He was pushing me," muttered Billy; and Juan, who was sniffling with all his might, wailed out, "He knocked me down."

"Which was the worse thing to do, James?" I asked, for I saw the boy watching me with curious eyes.

He answered more readily than I had expected: "Terry Law's boys drive ahead over everybody, and those Surano boys have to stand off just because he has turned all the others against them."

"Then you think William was wrong to hurt him as he did, even if Juan pushed against him in the first place?"

James did not answer. He kept his head

down, and I saw a look of self-conviction in his face, which was more promising to me than anything he could have said.

"Now, boys, you will not be so thoughtless again," I said hopefully. "Neither of you meant to hurt the other, but I want you to do more than not mean to do wrong: I want you to mean to do right."

Samuel McCook came in hastily and somewhat out of breath. But, finding that he was not late, he broke out into a cheerful smile and bade me good-morning. He had a little nosegay in his hand, which he gave me, saying that he had been helping Mr. Fayot, the florist, to pack seeds, and was afraid he had overstayed the time his mother told him to leave for school.

Little Bessie Parrish came up to the desk with something in her hand.

"It's Sammy's knife," she said; "he dropped it when he was climbing over the wall early this morning, before the school-gate was opened."

Her mother was the janitress, and they lived in a little cottage at the side of the school-house. Samuel's face flushed. James

looked up quickly, and his expression was one of mingled shame and perplexity. But I saw that his intelligence was quick enough to pierce the secret of the lovely flower, for his eyes turned from Samuel's blushing face to the garden outside with a look that connected and revealed it all.

Not once that day did I have to reprove him for an assault, either open or covert, on any of the scholars, and I was forced to acknowledge that he made a great deal of the trouble I had experienced the day before, because, now that he behaved well, all the rest were comparatively quiet.

At recess I called both him and Samuel to my desk. Each of them appeared confused and uncomfortable at first, but greatly relieved when I explained the object of the interview :

“ You both know the Indian that lives by the laguna, boys ? ”

“ Oh yes, ma’am,” said Samuel, and James nodded, with a trace of suspicion still in his face.

“ Well, he met me this morning and gave me these two pretty shells to give you ; which

was very kind in one so poor and friendless as he seems to be."

"Yes indeed," said Samuel eagerly. "Chumbo is good; I never knew any one so generous as he is, considering how little he knows about such things. It was he who carried me home when I fell from the tree, Miss Herbert."

James turned the shell over and over in his hand and looked awkward and uncomfortable. He was so little accustomed to be conversed with kindly that he really did not know how to conduct himself properly. I was anxious to make him speak and to learn how to gain his confidence, but it was not a promising thing to attempt.

"How did you become acquainted with Chumbo?" I inquired by way of beginning.

It was an unfortunate one; James's face grew crimson, his brow fell heavily, and he began to scowl.

"All the boys chased him as much as I did," he muttered, "but I get the blame of everything."

"He did not blame you; he said he liked you."

His brow became brighter at this, and he said something in his mumbling way about Chumbo being first-rate and no sneaking telltale.

“Does he ever behave kindly to the other boys, or are you and Samuel especial favorites?” I inquired.

“They all throw stones at him and call him names—all but Frank Blaine and Sam McCook and myself,” said James in a sudden burst of confidence. “I used to do it too, but he helped Frank and me once, and since then I steal our Kitty’s turkey-eggs and give them to him.”

This was a bad way to express gratitude. I wanted to tell him so without making him regret his unusual communicativeness, but I scarcely knew how to do it.

“I wonder you do not have chickens and turkeys of your own, James?” I said.

“Father will not give me any.”

“Did he give Kitty hers?”

“Yes, because she does the work before she goes to school. But I cannot wash dishes and clean up the floor.”

“If you would help Mr. Fayot he would

pay you something," said Samuel eagerly. "He gave me a beautiful plant for packing seeds for him."

The fear of having said too much restrained Samuel from going on further, but I saw that James was pleased with the idea.

"I would like to work among splendid flowers like his," said he, "but that old Frenchman is down on me."

"Why?" I asked, watching his face closely.

"Oh, I don't know. Yes, I do, too, for they say I broke his windows when I was throwing stones at McBrides' goats."

He began in a careless tone, and ended with a more serious one, being apparently governed by a sudden determination to tell the truth, though he felt ashamed of it.

"Were you angry with the goats, James?"

"No, but I was mad enough at Bill McBride for letting them eat up my flowers."

"I am glad you love flowers," said I. "They are beautiful things, and God made them for our delight and pleasure. But he made goats too, and they can feel pain, poor things!"

"I don't mean to stone them any more," said James doggedly; and I felt very much encouraged even by this ungracious promise. I saw that he was restive and anxious to get away, so I did not detain him longer.

He ran out directly to his flowers, and began constructing a higher fence to protect his fuchsia.

That evening I stopped at the green-house, and after buying a little pot of heart's-ease and some mignonette for James's garden, I asked Mr. Fayot if he knew the boy, and tried to interest him in an effort for his reformation.

The florist shook his head and looked very hopeless. He pointed to a row of broken bottles stuck on the top of the wall that overlooked the road, and gave me to understand that it was chiefly on account of "ze Batter boy," as he called him, that he was obliged thus to protect his premises from invasion.

Some daisies and other plants had been stolen from the hotbed when Mr. Fayot's attention was occupied in the green-house, and his son Julius, who was one of my

scholars, had seen "James make off with them," he said. As for taking him into his employ, it was not to be thought of; he would steal and destroy more than the wages of a dozen boys, Mr. Fayot declared.

I was very sorry, for the florist needed a boy's help and was willing to pay for it. To get James employment out of school-hours, and to waken his sense of honor and love of industry for the sake of the honest independence it would give him, were starting-points in the right way, I thought, and I felt deeply disappointed at failing in this effort.

As I came away, rather disconsolately, I met Samuel and James together; they were just starting in the short-cut over the sand-hills toward the laguna. James carried two blue gull-eggs in his hand, and his companion had a yellow squash, of which he said the Indian was very fond.

"James and I are going to Chumbo's," said Samuel.

"His mother gave me these eggs," James said, holding them up with a look of extreme gratification. "Chumbo will be glad

enough to get them ; he likes them best of all food, but he's too lazy to go over to Saucelito to find them."

I nodded and smiled approvingly on this mission. It seemed as if the boy was doing for the victim of his former enmity and persecution all I desired to accomplish, but failed to see the means of performing. Already the evil scowl that had seemed habitual to his face was giving way to an expression of interest and animation. It mattered little whose efforts should prove successful if the boy only improved. I went on my way with a lightened heart, and felt quite hopeful.

CHAPTER IV.

SARAH CROFTON'S FALL.

"Who can understand his errors?"—Ps. xix. 12.

EGBERT HYDE had a little sister named Effie, a sweet-faced child, who was so amiable as to be rather a martyr to the admiration of the other girls. Her hair was long and golden and fell in beautiful ringlets over her neck and shoulders, descending nearly to her waist; and to curl these fair locks seemed a perfect passion with all the children near her.

One Sarah Crofton in particular, a good-natured child, but a great busybody, could not keep her hands off Effie's hair, but was constantly winding the long tresses round her fingers, until poor Effie would wink and grimace under the pain of the operation. Sarah Crofton was also sometimes given to telling tales and making mischief; and this

occupied her so much that I was not surprised to hear she had remained stationary in her class for nearly two years.

Yet she was not an ill-meaning girl, and her dullness was not owing to want of intelligence. She could learn readily, but seemed more interested in the gossip of the school and neighborhood than in her studies.

During my first week at the Laguna School her hand was constantly going up in token of her having something to communicate. But it generally developed into a breathless ejaculation of "Oh, teacher, Jenny Ware says that her mother is coming to complain of Jim Finney; he has broken her paling down;" or, "Oh, teacher, Colonel Hyde is going to punish Batters for frightening Egbert's colt. He can put him in prison, Dicky Law says." So I determined to allow her signals to pass unnoticed.

Since the day that Samuel and James visited Chumbo together I had observed, with increasing pleasure, the peaceful and even friendly understanding existing between the two boys. I had instituted a series of prizes as encouragement for the different

classes to study. Terence Law proved to be a very ambitious boy, anxious to excel in all he undertook, and he became so much engrossed in his lessons that he and Egbert did not quarrel openly for several days. Mr. Weston congratulated me on the improved appearance and order of the school, and I began to feel more faith in my old plan of government, when one day, at recess, a wailing became audible outside, which swelled as it drew near into hysterical screaming, and Sarah Crofton was borne in, bleeding and prostrate, in the arms of her companions.

“What is the matter?” I cried in alarm, and a half dozen answered at once to the effect that James Finney was the cause of the dreadful affair.

After some difficulty I arrived at a clear and simple statement of facts. There was a large seesaw erected at the upper end of the playground, where the girls' yard was divided by a high fence from the boys'. Sarah Crofton had seated herself on one end of this to enjoy a ride, inviting Jane Ware to occupy the other. Their weight was about equal, and they vibrated up and down very

nicely until James Finney, who had climbed the fence—an act in itself a breach of the rules—screamed out to Jane Ware, just at the moment when Sarah was up in the air at the greatest height of the board, “Jump off, Jenny, jump off! it is going to break.”

His loud scream terrified the girl, who instantly tumbled off, letting the other end come down with a violent jerk that threw poor Sarah over a tree-stump and bruised and cut her quite seriously.

When the bell was rung and the scholars came in, James was missing, nor did he return that day.

Sarah was taken home in a chair by two of Mr. Weston's boys. After dismissing school in the afternoon I went to see her.

I found her mother very much excited, and wrathful against my “worst boy.”

“Why is such a wicked creature allowed to stay in the school with innocent children?” she inquired; “their very lives are not safe while he is around.”

I did not attempt to defend his actions, but I tried to moderate her anger. I told her he had been treated with such rigor and

bitterness on all sides that retaliation had become his only defence; that he was not good or wise enough to control his revengeful passions; and that it was wrong to taunt or provoke such a boy.

“Sarah never put a straw in his way in her life,” exclaimed Mrs. Crofton. “She is a harmless, kind-hearted child, with whom no one can be angry.”

“No,” interrupted Sarah, whimpering, “I never did a thing to Batters in my life, and he is always abusing me for nothing. One day he made me fall down Blaines’ steps, just because I rang the bell to tell them he was climbing over their wall to look in at Frank’s window when he was sick. He hollered ‘Boo!’ and ran at me, so that I was frightened and fell down.”

“Did you do or say anything to worry him yesterday or to-day?” I asked.

“No, indeed, teacher—not a single earthly thing. I only showed Egbert Hyde and the boys where he had hid the boards and sticks he was whittling to make Chumbo a chair. I did not know they would make a bonfire of them last night.”

I glanced at Mrs. Crofton, but saw no consciousness of her daughter's meddlesome habits reflected in her face.

"No, indeed," she said soothingly; "how could you know, poor child? But never mind; Miss Herbert will turn him out of school now, I hope, and that will be one blessing."

"But, Mrs. Crofton," I expostulated, "supposing that I had the authority to do so, my turning him out of school would not prevent his being troublesome and mischievous; he cannot be turned out of the neighborhood."

"That is true; I wish he could. But when he is out of the school it will prevent his making trouble there, and his parents will not be able to stand him at home; so he will be sent off to sea, which is what ought to have been done with him long ago."

I did not agree to this very heartily, and just then little Effie Hyde came in with a nosegay for Sarah. She was, as I had observed from the first, a natural peacemaker; and having presented her flowers and expressed her sorrow for poor Sarah's hurt, she began to whisper to her softly.

"But I *will* blame him, and he *did* mean it!" cried Sarah angrily. "He said he would pay me when he got so mad at me just for telling Mr. Fayot he broke his windows, when it was Terry Law who threw the stones."

"Jenny Ware says he called to her not to jump when he saw he had frightened her. He only meant to make you afraid, not to hurt you."

"Never mind," said Sarah; "our Henry told his mother, and they are going to have him beaten with a cowhide. Just think of that!"

"Oh, I hope not," said the gentle Effie, shuddering. "I am afraid our Egbert worries him and helps to make him cross, and that makes me always sorry for poor Batters."

This conversation caused me to feel uneasy. I had been perhaps too sanguine about the poor boy, and these warlike preparations seemed the destruction of all my hopes. I took my leave of Mrs. Crofton, begging her to consider the circumstances of the case, and remember that James Finney had always been the object of so much per-

secution that it was really a Christian duty to try a gentler plan with him. She did not acquiesce in this view, I am sorry to say, but seemed to think that her daughter's injuries called aloud for vengeance.

At the opening of the Laguna Valley stood a very pretty little church, and at its side, with a neat lawn and flower-garden in front, the rectory.

Mr. Harris, the clergyman of St. John's, was an elderly and very kind gentleman. His daughter-in-law and two grandchildren lived with him, and from the way in which they had evidently been guided and instructed at home I argued much for the worth and goodness of the family.

Caroline was a girl of nine, a quiet, thoughtful child. But Minnie, a year or two older, was a merry chatterbox, whom nothing but the best of training could ever have reduced to order and discretion. Their grandfather had evidently heard from them of the school-trouble, and was waiting for me now at the gate, with a look of some anxiety on his benevolent face.

“What is this I hear, Miss Herbert?” he

inquired. "My grandchildren tell me one of their schoolmates was seriously hurt through the means of that untoward lad, James Finney."

I explained as well as I could, and was glad to see that he did not condemn my "worst boy" unconditionally, but felt a deep interest in every excusing circumstance that I could suggest. He gave me much good advice, without appearing to dictate to me. Indeed, it was impossible to listen to so true and gentle a Christian without learning a lesson from his lips.

He told me that he had heard so many complaints of James Finney, without ever seeing the lad, that he was prepared to meet a monster. But one night, after having been called to see poor Frank Blaine in one of his serious attacks of illness, he had left the sick boy's room, and was coming out of the side door, when he heard a fall on the other side of the garden-wall, and, hurrying out, saw a boy scrambling to his feet. It was starlight, and the lamp in front of the house scarcely threw its light far enough to make things very plain or clear; so he

could only see the outline of the boy's face, but he judged by his voice that he had been crying.

"Will he die, sir?" he asked as soon as he gained his feet; "will poor Frank have to die?"

Mr. Harris said he could scarcely tell, that he hoped and prayed he would recover, but that he was in the hands of his loving Father, who would do all things well.

The boy groaned as if in pain, and limped away with his head hanging down in apparent grief. Next day his grandchildren told him that the boy Batters, as he was called, had sprained his ankle in trying to get over somebody's wall to steal fruit or flowers.

This unjust report had always remained in the clergyman's mind as a reason for merciful conclusions concerning the poor lad; and now that I too argued in his favor he felt sure that many of his actions had been misconstrued, and greatly encouraged me in the hope of his reformation.

I was detained so long by this conversation that when I came to Mrs. Finney's door I found little Effie Hyde had arrived

there before me, and was earnestly representing the best side of James's case to his enraged mother.

"I would not have cared," I heard Mrs. Finney say as I drew near, "if Jim had given one of the Morleys or Harrises a whack. They are stuck-up people, and think themselves much better than their neighbors. But Mrs. Crofton is a nice, sociable woman, who will come over for a chat or a bit of news any day. Only last week she came and told me about the McBrides, next door—what they said of our Kitty's new spring suit the day she went on the picnic, the mean creatures! Oh, she is a real friendly woman, and I will break Jim's head for daring to touch her Sarah. He had better not come home, or he will feel his father's cowhide."

Effie began to plead again so much better than I could have done that I stole off unobserved, but greatly distressed and anxious about the erring boy.

“...for without me has she suffered, and of her strength to stand she gathereth none, but as a widow she liveth with bread I “hast even for them I have left out of thy troublous I am the friend of a widow.”

CHAPTER V.

JAMES IN DANGER.

“The Lord’s hand is not shortened, that it cannot save.”—
ISA. lix : 1.

SAMUEL McCOOK had not been at school for two days. A note from his mother informed me that his weak limb was troubling him. But the morning after Sarah Crofton’s fall he appeared in the playground, and began to water James’s little garden. Kitty Finney, who was a pupil in Mr. Weston’s room, came in before school opened and asked me if I knew where their James was, for he had not been home all night. I said I did not, but that I hoped he would be in school as usual. He did not come, however, and when I asked the scholars if they had seen him since the fall in the playground, they all replied in the negative.

Samuel was very attentive to his lessons all day. Indeed, I must confess that James's absence made a decided improvement in the order of the whole school. The Spanish boys—who, next to him, were disposed to be the most troublesome of my scholars—seemed quite awed, and wore a subdued air of expectancy; for Egbert Hyde had informed them and the rest of the boys that his father was prepared to try, convict and execute James Finney as Sarah Crofton's murderer.

They all looked rather disappointed when I told them that beyond a few scratches, that would soon heal, Sarah was all right, and would soon be back in school again; and Bessie Parrish held up her hand to request permission to say, “But, teacher, she has three big pieces of sticking-plaster on her face, and her nose is swelled.”

“Yes, my dear,” I answered, “I know that, but she is not injured seriously, I am glad to say.” Then I thought it right earnestly to entreat them all never to provoke each other to anger. I avoided mentioning either James or Sarah by name, but I told them how much

evil could creep in where the Golden Rule was forgotten.

Nothing was heard of James that day. I asked Kitty, as I passed her gate, if he had returned.

She shook her head laughing, and replied, "No, and he had better not. He is sure to catch it if he does."

Mrs. McCook leaned over her garden-paling, and seemed anxious to speak to me when I reached her cottage.

"Sammy has just come back from Chumbo's hut, Miss Herbert," she said. "He asked me to let him go there directly after school to see if James had taken refuge with the Indian. But he says there is no one there, and the place is closed up. Where do you suppose they have gone?"

"Do you think they are together, wherever they are?"

"Yes, because there is no one else who would shelter Batters. Frank Blaine and Chumbo were his only friends until, a few weeks ago, he seemed to become civil to Sammy. He is not a fit companion for a young boy like my son, but Sammy has a

great desire to help him along and to be friendly with him."

"Which I am very grateful and happy to see," said I; "for if James had received more of such treatment, and less of abuse, I feel sure he would never have become the lawless, reckless lad he is."

"Here comes Minnie Harris, running as if she had some urgent news to tell," said Mrs. McCook, looking down the road; and following her gaze I saw the clergyman's granddaughter flying along, with her hat falling down her back and her curls blowing out behind.

"Miss Herbert," she cried, "wait a minute, please; I want to tell you about Batters. What do you think? He has stolen the Suranos' boat and dragged it down to the long pier, and he and Chumbo are gone to Saucelito for gulls' eggs!"

"How did you hear all this, Minnie?"

"Mamma told me to go to Mrs. Norris's after school and tell her about the Sunday-school meeting to-morrow evening, because she is going to gather a class of the Sand-hill children, and try to help the Laguna

School by keeping the scholars out of mischief on Sunday. I was going along near Michael Surano's boat-shed when Thomas Walker ran up and said, 'I've seen them! I've seen them! Batters has the boat in the water near the long pier, and Chumbo is in it too. They are going to Saucelito.' Old Michael said awful words, and tore up the sand and threw it in the air by handfuls, he was so angry. But I ran on till I reached the hill near Point Lobos, and there I saw them in the boat rowing away from the shore."

Mrs. McCook's face turned pale. "The Laguna people will not be troubled any more by James Finney," she said. "Every one knows that old Surano's boat is not seaworthy—that he has been afraid to use it himself this season, and borrows Silvio's whenever he goes out to fish."

"Does James know anything about boats?" I asked, sharing her alarm. "His father should be told of this immediately."

"I will go in and see Mrs. Finney," said Mrs. McCook with some reluctance, in reply to my entreating look. "But I wish you

would go with me, Miss Herbert, for I am afraid she will only become excited, which will do poor James no good, and something ought to be done at once."

"I will go and tell grandpa," cried Minnie. "I know he would do anything to save James, for he said to-day that if Mrs. Norris could persuade him to join the Sunday-school class he would feel so happy and thankful that he would not know what to do."

We went back to the Finneys', and found James's mother busily sewing at a gay dress for Kitty to wear to a party, while Nelly and Jane were quarreling in scant wardrobes of rags on the front porch.

She did not seem to be much disturbed when we introduced the subject of our visit by asking if she had heard anything of James.

"No, indeed, not a word," she replied. "He is staying away, hoping his bad deeds will be forgotten. But he need not flatter himself he will escape a thrashing. Come when he will, he will get it; for his father, like myself, is determined to do his duty by his children. Excuse the looks of things, if

you please," she continued; "I have not done much work to-day, on account of making Kitty's dress for the ball. It would be too bad to disappoint her and the young ladies with whom she keeps company, for my Kitty has her society, as well as those that live in grand houses, and she is as good as they are, though they do try to turn up their noses at her."

Mrs. McCook interrupted this discourse by telling Mrs. Finney rather abruptly that Minnie Harris had seen her son with the Indian Chumbo in the old fishing-boat of Michael Surano, bound for Saucelito, and that the miserable craft was not safe for an hour on the bay.

At first the motherly feelings of the listener seemed rather dormant. She stitched away on the frills and puffs of Kitty's tarletan, and said that Jim was a born scamp and the bane of her life. At length, however, she seemed to wake to the knowledge of his danger, and her tone changed to a hysterical scream. She asked to have the account repeated to her, and when Mrs. McCook related Minnie's story over again, she took to shrieking and

called the Indian and Surano some very bad names, accusing them of entrapping her “poor, dear boy” and endangering his life. In the excitement of her feelings she flung aside Kitty’s gauzy dress, and began wringing her hands and blaming everybody with James’s death, which she received as a foregone conclusion.

“But he is not dead, Mrs. Finney,” said her neighbor soothingly. “He is merely in danger, and we came to warn you, so that the best means might be taken to save him.”

But Mrs. Finney was not practical; she walked the floor, calling him her poor murdered boy, sacrificed to the resentment of a pack of teachers and scholars, and driven away from his home as if he had been a dog.

“Let us go to Mr. Harris or Colonel Hyde,” said Mrs. McCook in an under-tone to me; and, rising to go out, we met Mr. Finney on the porch. He was a much better-dressed man than I should have supposed possible from his surroundings, and had an air of pompous authority about him, though he received us quite graciously.

Mrs. Finney began to rave to him on the subject of James's dangerous situation in Surano's old boat, but he quieted her and made light of her fears.

"Mrs. Finney is inclined to be nervous," he remarked in a lofty tone. "It is the weakness of her sex to anticipate trouble. But we all know that boys are miraculously preserved through all sorts of danger."

He then apologized for their rather limited style of living, and explained to us the vastness of his future possessions, and closed by remarking that we found them in their chrysalis state, but that they would be able to do us more honor when they came out as butterflies by and by in a fine villa residence.

Mr. Harris opened the gate before we reached it. He had come to offer Mr. Finney Colonel Hyde's pleasure-boat and his own hired man to assist in going after James.

"I saw the colonel as soon as I heard Minnie's account," he said, "and fortunately found him in his garden. He offered his boat at once, and our man Andy is a fine rower. Can I help you to find any others to accompany you, Mr. Finney?"

“ You are very good, sir,” said Mr. Finney, “ but I have no doubt the boy can manage very well without any aid. You remember that he went off with Frank Blaine on one occasion, and Captain Blaine became seriously alarmed ; but I used my customary philosophy, and the result was that the boy came home all right.”

“ But he owed his life then to the Indian who is now with him,” said Mr. Harris, “ and had it not been for him there would have been a serious ending to that frolic. I think you had better go after your boy, Mr. Finney.”

“ You are very good, sir, but it would be quite impossible. I am going to address a ward-meeting to-night on the subject of land-titles. Pray give yourself no concern ; Jim will turn up all right.”

Mr. Harris made no further effort to induce Mr. Finney to rescue his own son, but, turning to his mother, who appeared undecided whether to quarrel with her husband’s philosophy or to share it, he said,

“ I will go down to the beach and see the Silvio men. It is my duty as a Christian

to do what I can, and these men will no doubt aid me to the extent of their abilities."

Mrs. McCook could hardly restrain her indignation at the unfeeling conduct of Mr. Finney, and when we were away from the house she told the minister she really wondered at his patience with such an unnatural creature.

"He is very much intoxicated, and, though we may condemn the habit severely, we can scarcely judge of the real character of the man while he is under the influence of liquor," said the patient old gentleman.

I had not thought of it before, but when I recalled Mr. Finney's rolling eye and stilted tone I wondered I had not understood him better.

Mr. Harris found Colonel Hyde waiting for him at the roadside, and they hurried away together, intent on a generous effort to save the unfortunate Batters from the result of his own daring folly.

There was nothing that I could do in the matter, yet I could not rest at home, and that night was one of the longest I ever spent. Next morning I almost dreaded to

approach the laguna, lest the tidings awaiting me there were those of death. But just as I came into the short cut between the sandhills, Effie Hyde, who had been waiting there, ran forward to meet me with a joyful face.

“Batters came home this morning, safe and well, Miss Herbert,” she cried. “Just think! The fog came up, and Chumbo steered the wrong way, so that, instead of going over to the island, they ran out to sea, and the boat began to fill with water. Then they had to stop rowing and bail it with Chumbo’s hats. They did not see where they were going until a ship’s light warned them to get out of its way, and while trying to row off they swamped and the boat went down, leaving them in the water.”

Here she stopped to take breath, but seeing my anxious face she hastened to conclude her story: “It was the *Gray Eagle*, Captain Blaine’s ship, and poor Batters shrieked out so that Frank, who was on deck, heard him, and two of the sailors jumped over and held them up until they lowered ropes to take them on board.”

"When did they reach home?"

"Just about daylight this morning, and Captain Blaine went up to see the Finneys himself, so that they should not punish Batters."

I was very much relieved at this happy termination of what I feared was a most serious affair, and, thanking Effie for so kindly removing my anxiety, I went on with her toward the school-house.

Sarah Crofton was there, with only a slight scratch or two on her face, and, to judge by the way in which she chatted to the group around her, her spirits were quite restored.

Egbert Hyde and his party were talking very earnestly together at the farther end of the playground; and, having concluded to appeal to the boys' magnanimity in James Finney's behalf to give him a peaceable and generous reception on his return to school, I took the opportunity and called them all in.

Egbert and Terence were the two to whom I particularly addressed myself, as they were the leaders of the two sets of boys, and their

adherents would be likely to follow whatever line of conduct they showed them as an example.

But I found that the prejudice of the greater portion of the school was deeply rooted against poor James Finney. Years of antagonism and conflict had to be overcome before they could learn the Christian doctrine of forgiving injuries, rewarding evil with good, and encouraging every germ of improvement in an unpromising soil.

A very few seemed to feel as I would have them. Samuel McCook was all attention and sympathy; so was a boy called Audley Norris, who from sickness was absent when I first came to the school, but who proved to be an excellent scholar and a warm-hearted, generous-spirited boy. He was older than most of his companions, and, without being bold or obtrusive, would speak out in a frank, sensible manner that gave me great pleasure. Having requested permission to do so now, he said he thought the boys who had driven Batters away in fear owed him a little reparation. He glanced toward Egbert Hyde as he spoke, and

Egbert grew very much confused and murmured something about telltales.

"I am not telling tales, Miss Herbert," said Audley Norris. "I am really sorry to think that the Laguna boys are called 'the quarrelers' by the city boys, and, as I am one of them, I would like to begin a life of peace by making friends with our old enemies, Batters and the Suranos."

I said I was very happy to hear him talk so wisely, and that I truly hoped others might feel as he did. I was standing near Edward Morley, and I heard him whisper to his friend Egbert, "His aunt keeps Sunday-school, and he is going to teach a class too, he is so pious;" at which Egbert and some others tittered and Audley grew angry.

"I wish I was good enough to do so," he said rather sharply, "but I hope I am too good to try and frighten away a poor boy by telling him that he is to be put in prison if the officers can catch him."

This personal turn to the conversation did not promise well. I repeated my charge to the boys as decidedly as possible, and rang the bell for the school to come to order.

James was not present that morning. At recess his sister told me he had a chill "from the scare he got from being tipped over last night." She laughed, and said she guessed he only tried to make believe he was sick, to save himself from a whipping; besides, he wanted to see Frank Blaine, who had just returned from Mexico.

The boys held a meeting under the window back of my desk during the noon-hour, and, sitting there quietly, I overheard its object and design.

It was proposed that a Laguna baseball club should be formed—that the boys should band together and subscribe money to purchase a new set of bats and balls, which should constitute them a stock company of owners, and prevent any one from joining in their games or councils except regularly-received members.

"This will keep Sam McCook and Frank Blaine out, because they say it is not right to divide off into parties at school," said Egbert Hyde; "but, for my part, I do not believe in associating with thieves and vagabonds, and I will never play in this yard

if Batters or those Greaser boys come into a game."

Edward Morley eagerly supported this view of things, and he and John and Richard Hunter made speeches in favor of it, and against receiving James Finney or his supporters with any degree of toleration.

"Miss Herbert is always talking Scripture at us, as if it was a Sunday-school ; but she must remember that 'Evil communications corrupt good manners' is Scripture too, and we do not want our manners corrupted by such low fellows as Batters. He finds society with a Digger, and that shows what he is." Richard Hunter said this in a tone of contempt, and his brother cried out as if struck with a sudden idea: "Oh, I say, boys, I want to tell you something. Wouldn't it be fun to drive old Chumbo away from the laguna? I have just thought of a first-rate plan, and no one need know anything about it but us."

He had gradually lowered his voice as he spoke, and he now ended in little more than a whisper.

His communication seemed to be well

received. They all laughed heartily at the secret he imparted in an under-tone, and engaged to join him in very high spirits.

Out of the window at the other side of the room I saw Samuel McCook, Audley Norris and three or four other boys engaged in conversation. Presently, James Finney and a pale-faced boy entered the yard together, and joined them.

CHAPTER VI.

JAMES AND CHUMBO.

“Bring forth, therefore, fruits meet for repentance.”—MATT. iii. 8.

IT was very evident from James's manner that he was anxious to avoid observation, and a good deal sobered by what had happened. When school began he slunk into his seat in a cowardly, shamefaced way, and only answered my friendly greeting with an unintelligible mutter. Frank Blaine, the delicate-looking boy, on the contrary, came directly up to me and spoke like a friend for James. “My father told me I might offer myself as security for his future good-behavior,” he said. “If the boys will only let him alone, I am sure he will never trouble them again, and I am going to try and see that they do not annoy and provoke him.”

Egbert Hyde and some of the others exchanged glances, and I thought it was best not to bring the subject up again just then. So I only said that I was willing to accept Frank's assurance, and would be glad to have him and James wait for me after school, as I had something to propose to them.

It was not with much hope of compliance on James's part that I did so when the time came; but I felt it necessary, for the satisfaction of Mrs. Crofton, that James should see her and promise never again to interfere with her little girl in any way.

He quite surprised me by answering, "Teacher, I said so this morning. I went over there on purpose, and I told her she had better teach her Sarah to mind her own business, or next time she wouldn't get off so easy."

I said he did right to make the apology, but deprecated the threat.

"I hoped that you were done with revenge and quarreling of all kinds, James," I said.

"Oh, I did not mean that I would hurt her any more," he explained; "but she

keeps poking her nose into everything, and she will be sure to catch it if she doesn't stop."

While I was still talking with them a pleasant lady, elderly and very genial and interesting in her manner, came into the school-room with Audley Norris.

He introduced her as his aunt, and she told me she was very glad to find me engaged as I was, for she had come to beg my influence to induce James Finney to join her Sunday-school class.

At the name of Sunday-school, James began to scowl and fidget, and to show signs of dissatisfaction in various ways.

"Mr. Harris says we shall have a pleasant room at the back of the church, where there are pictures and maps and books to tell us all we want to know; and I have already put down the names of seven boys who promise to be there next Sunday."

I looked at James entreatingly, and he answered my gaze with a mingled expression corresponding with his words:

"I would like it well enough, but I have no clothes."

"You only want to be clean and tidy, James," said Mrs. Norris.

“Oh yes, I know all about that; if you have old clothes on you, the boys make fun of you in church or anywhere else,” said James.

“How easily you might earn yourself plain, decent clothes, James!” said Mrs. Norris seriously. “I would not insult a strong, independent-spirited boy like you by offering you as a gift what you are fitted to buy for yourself, but I should be very glad to point out to you the means of working honestly for all you need; and I think you would enjoy the feeling of wearing garments for which you had paid by your own industry.”

James muttered something about only caring for a fellow when he was all dressed up, and despising him when he did not look nice and stylish.

Mrs. Norris smiled: “You know better than that, James. I do not pay as much attention to the outside as you do, for I heard you call to Samuel McCook the other day not to eat some apples you picked up

on the outside of Hunter's orchard, because the skin was dry and blotched, and they were only fit to throw to the pigs. I would never condemn any person or thing altogether on account of external appearance, but I always like to improve it if I can do so."

James smiled, but relapsing instantly into his suspicious nature, said, "You don't ask any of the genteel boys to go to Sunday-school. There are the Hunters and the Morleys and Egbert Hyde, and others like them; why don't you go after them?"

"Most of them are scholars already," said Mrs. Norris. "Besides, I have only one class to make up, and I began with my own nephew, Audley here, and went around choosing others, one of whom chanced to be you."

"Please choose me, Mrs. Norris," said Samuel McCook.

"And me too," said Frank Blaine.

"Now, then, my number is complete," said Mrs. Norris, smiling. "Ten are enough to begin with, and unless Julius Fayot's father thinks it too far for him to go to the city

every Sunday, there is no other boy in your room, Miss Herbert, for me to claim."

"Julius said his father wanted him to go to St. John's, if you took a boys' class there, aunt," said Audley.

"Well, I am going to the green-house now, and will speak to Mr. Fayot about it," said Mrs. Norris; and turning to James, she asked if he would not walk that way with her, which he readily agreed to do.

She stopped a few minutes to talk about our school interests, and she had such a cheerful, encouraging manner that the boys and myself seemed alike pleased and refreshed by her hearty spirit. At parting she said in a low tone that we must work together—that two or three, being gathered together in the name of the Lord, could not fail if they put their trust in him. "There is no work in which we can afford to do without his help and guidance," she continued; "and the education of youth is so serious a labor that it demands all the grace he bestows to aid it."

My poor little scholar, Jane Ware, was

very sick. Sarah Crofton, whose busy nature could not be restrained, came to me with dilated eyes and heaving chest and began to describe the child's sufferings: "Oh, teacher, she has a swelled throat, with a great lump on each side, so that she cannot breathe; and she coughs so hard that the doctor says she must die if she does not get better soon. Her mother is nearly crazy, and her father is away off in the mines, and cannot come home for two months."

"Did you see Jane yourself, Sarah?"

"No, ma'am, but Bessie Parrish says her mother heard all about it from the milkman, and our Harry was playing with Terry Law, and he told the boys that there were two doctors there at once; so she must be nearly dead, Miss Herbert."

After school I went to see how much of this account owed its origin to Sarah's lively imagination, and discovered that my poor little scholar was very ill, and that the family had been very badly off. Her absent father did not go to the mines to find employment until he had tried hard to get it in the city. They had therefore exhausted everything in

the time of waiting, and were bare of even the necessaries of life.

Before her daughter's illness Mrs. Ware had got work as a washer and ironer, but Jane's sickness had interrupted it, so that now one source of her small income was gone.

"Miss Esther Blaine is Jane's Sunday-school teacher," she told me, "and when Batters heard that my poor child was sick he went and told Miss Esther; and she came right over, and brought her some nice fruit and jellies. I never saw a boy look more pleased than Batters did when I told him of it this morning."

This was only a few days after Mrs. Norris's visit, and his conduct at school had been so circumspect that I really began to look on him as a reformed boy.

"I think James is greatly improved," I said, "and am very glad to hear of any act of his that shows good-feeling and kindness."

"Well, then, Miss Herbert, I must tell you another good thing he did," said good-natured Mrs. Ware. "Though I cannot leave Jenny long enough to do my usual

washing, I can sew as I sit beside her; and Mrs. McBride, who gets more tailoring-work than she can do from the city stores, said she would let me have some of it if I could send for it every morning and take it back every night. I could not manage it very well, because of leaving Jane alone, but Batters offered to bring and take it, and he has done it for three mornings and evenings regularly."

I was really rejoiced to hear this, and finding that little Jane was now being cared for as well as possible by her good friend Miss Blaine and her kind, industrious mother, I left her the pretty book of illustrated Scripture stories I had brought her, and promised to come again the next day.

Farther up the road I met little Effie Hyde and Caroline Harris carrying some dainties in a covered basket to the sick child, and I commended their kindness to their little schoolmate.

"She is in our Sunday-school class, you know, Miss Herbert," said Effie, as if that accounted for it. "Miss Blaine keeps telling us every Sunday that the best way to

show we love the Saviour is to help and comfort each other; and Caroline and I are glad to get a chance to do something for poor Jenny."

When I reached Samuel McCook's house I met two more of my scholars intent on missionary-work, and I began to feel proud of my Laguna pupils, and to wonder how I could ever have felt discouraged or hopeless about them. This time it was Frank Blaine's and Samuel's benevolence that excited my admiration, and their errand was to carry food to poor Chumbo, who had been sick and unable to help himself ever since his adventure in the leaky boat.

"Michael Surano went over and threatened him terribly if he did not pay him for his boat," said Frank Blaine; "and poor Chumbo is very timid, so that he lies there in fear and misery all the time."

Remembering the Indian's wretched appearance, it seemed to me the height of folly for any one to expect him to produce money on any account; and I told the boys I wondered at Surano's want of sense in making such a demand.

They surprised me by saying that it was generally believed around the laguna that the Indian possessed concealed treasures; that he was one of a party of Diggers who had dwelt along the bay-shore before the white people came; and that a Spanish ship had been wrecked off Point Lobos one foggy night, and all on board had been drowned in their efforts to launch a small boat which capsized with them. The Diggers were thus left sole possessors of the spoil of the wreck, and so they divided and buried it all along the coast. Chumbo's share was popularly supposed to lie under his hut, and this conclusion was confirmed by the pertinacity with which he had clung to his miserable habitation, although in the very wet winter that had preceded this season Colonel Hyde had kindly offered him the use of a weather-tight shanty, much better and more comfortable than his miserable hovel.

The boys talked seriously, and were, I perceived, fully imbued with the belief in Chumbo's hidden wealth, though they disapproved of Surano's harsh effort to reach a portion of it.

"He must not come tormenting poor Chumbo while he is sick," said Frank, "or I will beg my father to interfere. The Indian is a kind old man, and though he does not seem right in his mind when he talks to other people, he is always sensible and good to Batters and me."

I commended their good work, and laughed at the treasure story, which they did not seem to like. I rather wondered at Batters not being of their party till I saw him start off on a run from McBride's door with a bundle toward Mrs. Ware's house, which was near the school.

This was a very satisfactory explanation of his not being one of Chumbo's visitors, but I found next morning that he had been there by his presenting me with a piece of white coral which Chumbo had sent me.

His manner was unusually nervous and perplexed, and I therefore concluded he had something to say to me, and asked him if it was not so.

"Yes, ma'am," he said, apparently much surprised at my penetration. Then he stammered and struggled with his words for a lit-

tle while, till at last he broke out with, “ Is there any law to make an Indian pay for an old boat that was of no use to any one?”

“ You mean Michael Surano’s, that you swamped, do you not, James?”

“ Yes, but it would have swamped anyhow; he could not use it to go a rod from shore, and now he comes bullying poor Chumbo, who has pains all over his back and cannot bend his knees, and he wants him to dig up his money and pay him for it, just as if it had been good.”

I looked, as I felt, quite serious, and James, watching my countenance, asked in surprise, “ Isn’t it wrong, Miss Herbert?”

“ Yes, James, but the wrong did not begin there; it was not Surano who commenced the difficulty.”

James remained silent, and something of his old sullen mood came over him. He mumbled in an under-tone to the effect that of course it was *his* fault—he was always to blame; nobody ever did anything wrong but *him*, etc.

I took no notice of this; at last he said, still in an injured strain, “ The boat was of

no use. It was not worth a cent, because it would drown any one who got into it."

"Had you known it was so worthless would you have ventured in it, James? Didn't you mean to borrow it, thinking it was a safe boat, and pay Surano for the loan when you came back?"

"Yes, I did, truly," said James; "I meant to give him bushels of gulls' eggs."

He looked very earnest and sincere, and I felt that half the errors he had ever committed were meant to be repaired in some such way.

"You did not get any eggs, but you sunk Surano's boat. Whatever wrong there was, therefore, belonged to you, and you should make the reparation."

"How can I? I have nothing to give him."

"Nothing but your time and strength, James."

He looked very gloomy and discontented, but kept silent for a time.

"James," I said, very gravely, "were you not in great danger that night in the bay?"

"Yes, ma'am."

“ You think of it at night when you wake up now, and you thank God that his mercy saved you from that yawning grave in the water ? ”

“ Yes, ma'am, I do, and I am trying to remember what Mr. Harris said to me when I was coming home about being saved for a good purpose. I like him ; he is a real good man, and no make-believe.”

“ What did he say you ought to do ? ”

“ Why, he told me I must show signs of a better life, so that God would see I did not forget the Gray Eagle's coming to my rescue ; and he called it ‘ bearing good fruit.’ All I know is, I have stopped swearing, and I have not thrown a single stone since at any one, nor hit our Kit, let her be ever so saucy to me. That is all I could do, and even that comes pretty hard sometimes.”

James did not count his kind acts for Mrs. Ware and Chumbo ; he had only tried to refrain from evil—the good came spontaneously.

“ Did Mr. Harris say for whose sake and by whose help you must try to do all this ? ”

“ Yes ; he said God's Son was my friend,

and that he loved me just as well as if I were dressed up in the height of the style and had a splendid house and horses and carriages of my own."

"True; and now, James, I leave you to think about Surano's boat. It was you, not Chumbo, who borrowed it. Captain Blaine can tell you what its value was, and perhaps show you some way to pay it back."

This conversation occurred during play-time, and James in a thoughtful way was gazing out of the window into the ground, where the newly-formed Laguna Club—distinguished from the other scholars by a star of silver paper pinned to their jackets—were enjoying a game with splendid new balls and ornamented bats.

"I think I know a way myself," said he musingly.

Just then a ball bounded in among his flowers, and he started up with an angry mutter, but controlled himself by a strong effort.

"Never mind, never mind," he growled. "Let them go ahead. They are trying to get me mad; that is what they are after."

James's feet were new in the narrow way, and it was rough and hard to tread just then: I tried to smooth it by going out and re-proving the boys' thoughtlessness and setting up the disordered stick-paling once more.

CHAPTER VII.

CHUMBO'S HUT.

“Though I walk in the midst of trouble, thou wilt revive me.”—Ps. cxxxviii. 7.

AT Mrs. Norris's invitation I went to St. John's Sunday-school a few weeks after her class was organized, and saw James Finney in his place in her class, dressed in a decent, clean suit that gave him a very different appearance from the one he had in his neglected rags. He seemed attentive and interested in his lessons, and his teacher told me that it was a pleasure to instruct him, he seemed so ready to learn and eager to understand.

Samuel and Frank were his companions, and I knew a good deal of the blessed change observable in the “worst boy” was owing to their example and encouragement.

Mrs. Harris had succeeded in inducing Kitty Finney to become a member of her class, and I noticed her sitting between Alice

Morley and Minnie Harris, and comparing her own rather flaunting toilet with theirs during the progress of the lesson, not entirely to her own satisfaction if I could judge by the frequent adjustment of her cape and under-sleeves and the clasping and unclasping of her cheap bracelets.

Jenny Ware, my poor sick scholar, still lingered on her couch of pain, and Mr. Harris spoke very tenderly of the dear little suffering girl and the patient, loving faith that sustained her.

He told, in a simple, attractive way, the story of her illness having brought her very near to the dear heavenly Father, who loves and pities his children in affliction, and mentioned a scholar who often stole an hour from play to come and read to her of the dear Saviour's love and mercy. He said he had one day overheard the reading of the Prodigal's story, and dwelt on the deep feeling with which the poor wanderer's return was rendered by the reader, who evidently saw the tired, foot-sore and heart-weary boy come back in rags and misery within sight of the grand old home he had left in folly.

My eyes chanced to turn to James Finney's face, and in a moment I knew who the reader was; his lips were parted, and he leaned forward, all alive to the minister's words, while his eyes swam in unconscious tears.

I was greatly affected at this sight. I had been doubtful of success even when I had been most anxious for it; and now that this unlooked-for evidence of the working of a sure and vital change appeared, I could scarcely contain my thankfulness.

I pressed Mrs. Norris's hand in token of my grateful pleasure, and said heartily, "There is no fear to be felt for James now. I see he is indeed a reformed boy, and I am truly thankful."

She looked very happy too, but not quite so confident. "He is under good influences," she said, "and I am full of hope for him."

The next week I heard he went to Mr. Fayot's garden every afternoon, and worked for him, giving fair satisfaction and showing great readiness in learning the business.

I went to see Jenny Ware frequently, but I never met him there, although I often saw

the other scholars gathered around the little bed, from which I gradually became convinced that poor dear Jenny would never rise again. She had always been a delicate child, and although the acute disease of her throat was allayed, a terrible cough lingered, shaking her weak frame and consuming her feeble strength.

The Parrishes were the Wares' nearest neighbors, but they too were poor people, and until lately they had found it hard to get on in life. Mrs. Parrish had been years before left a widow, but she had a son who, when he came of age, had set himself energetically to work to help his mother, and had gone on from one thing to another until he had acquired capital enough to become a newspaper-agent, a business sufficiently remunerative to give their neat home many additional articles of comfort. It was pleasant to mark how his good mother, as soon as her own means increased, helped her afflicted neighbor, and how poor little Jenny's suffering had drawn the sympathies of the Laguna people around the little cottage among the sandhills.

One afternoon the sick girl seemed better when I was there, and her mother said she was greatly refreshed by some grapes a kind friend from the city had sent her. They were all gone now, and I hastened away for the purpose of getting her some more, but found my friend at the fruit-store absent on a purchasing errand to the steamer laden with fresh grapes from the southern coast. He would be back in the evening, but too late for me to return to the valley; consequently I ordered a nice fresh package. I rose very early the next morning, having promised to breakfast with Mrs. Harris on my return from Mrs. Ware's.

The stores were all closed as I passed out the Laguna road; so were the dwelling-houses, and I did not meet any one stirring until I passed the church and came in sight of the school-house. Then I saw a boy running briskly along from the direction of the school with a large package under his arm. He started at sight of me, and I plainly recognized James Finney, but he did not desire to stop, and I thought he was not pleased at meeting me, for he kept right on

after a hurried word of greeting, and I wondered, without being able to discover, why he had so avoided me, and what his early errand might be.

Jenny was sleeping when I reached Mrs. Ware's. She had not rested during the night, and only sank into slumber about an hour before. Of course I did not disturb her, but left the fruit, with my love, for her when she should awake.

Mrs. Ware looked worn and sad. She had evidently not been in bed at all, and, coming to the door with me, remarked that somebody must have slept in the school-house yard, for she had seen a figure tumbling over the wall among the branches of the trees some time since daylight. I scarcely noted the incident as she mentioned it then, but I thought of it afterward.

I walked down toward the school before going to Mrs. Harris's, and saw Mrs. Parrish standing in her porch, with the broom and brushes ready for her morning's work in the school-room; but she seemed waiting for some one inside, and did not look toward me again.

After crossing the road and walking through the tule-path down by the laguna, I returned and reached the parsonage in good time for breakfast.

Minnie and Caroline had been gathering flowers to beautify the table, and their fresh young faces shone with pleasant excitement.

"We were afraid you were not coming, Miss Herbert," said Minnie. "Carrie and I have been running to the corner and looking down toward Fayot's all the morning, and just as Carrie said, 'I am afraid she will not come,' you appeared in the other direction."

"Yes, I took a walk by the laguna before I came here. I always wanted to see the little lake, and this was my first opportunity."

"Then perhaps you can tell us what occasioned the noise and smoke we noticed coming from that direction last evening," said Mr. Harris. "At first I thought some one had fired the tule, but it scarcely lasted long enough for that, and Harry Crofton told me it came from the neighborhood of Chumbo's hut."

"I did not go so far, and there was no sign of fire where I was among the tule," I said.

Mr. Harris appeared disturbed by the occurrence. "I wish I knew what it was," he said; "I wish I was quite sure there was no mischief at the bottom of it."

I thought of James Finney running along the road with a bundle under his arm, and a vague fear of his being mixed up with it made me uncomfortable.

Mrs. Harris set aside a dish of fruit and a small mug of cream to be carried over to Jenny Ware by the children on their way to school.

"Poor, dear little Jenny!" she sighed; "it is very sad to think of her lying there fading day by day. But even the darkest cloud has its silver lining, and there is a very bright one to that which hangs over Mrs. Ware's cottage. Sarah Crofton used to be the most troublesome and unmanageable child in the Sunday-school. I had almost given up the effort to impress her in any way, when, to my surprise and pleasure, she suddenly became interested and attentive to

her lessons. ‘I want to tell Jenny all about them,’ she said. ‘She asks me everything, and loves to hear what we learn each Sunday.’ That was the beginning of Sarah’s improvement, and every day seems to add to it. Sitting by the bedside of the patient child, she learns to control her own restless spirit, and in imparting pleasure and comfort to her suffering friend acquires a love of usefulness that conquers the meddlesome and erratic temper she used to have.”

“James Finney is another of Jenny’s debtors,” said the clergyman. “We have all tried to help that boy along, and his fright in the bay had a strong influence over him for good too; but I really believe the most lasting and beneficial lessons are those he takes from little Jane when he carries her mother’s work.”

“Perhaps that bundle may have been for Mrs. Ware,” I thought. “But no; if it had been, she would have spoken of it; and besides, he was hurrying away past her house, without stopping.” I was half inclined to mention it to Mr. Harris, but some impulse restrained me, and after a pleasant hour or

so I was warned by the clock that it was time to go to the school.

Harry Crofton, Audley Norris and some of the other boys were standing in front of the playground talking eagerly to Thomas Walker, a boy from the laguna. They left him and ran up to meet me when I came in sight.

Two or three of them spoke at once, and at first I could scarcely tell what they said, as they repeated the name of Chumbo frequently and in great excitement. At length Audley became intelligible above the rest, and from him I learned that Chumbo's hut had been blown up by gunpowder, and the earth all dug up under it by some thieves in search of his treasure, while Chumbo himself must have been killed by the explosion, as he could nowhere be found.

"Then he is safe," I said, trying to conceal my own alarm, "for if he had been blown up his body would have been found somewhere."

"Who could have done it?" repeated every boy.

It was a question I asked myself, and Mr.

Weston echoed it as soon as I entered the school-room.

"Our boys are entirely innocent of this affair, Miss Herbert," he said with great satisfaction. "I have already asked every one on his word of honor if he was near that place since school closed yesterday. You see, I have the name of every lad in our building signed to this solemn disclaimer, except James Finney's. I am waiting for him to come and answer for himself."

I looked at the paper; it was headed by a statement that no boy whose name appeared below had been in the vicinity of Chumbo's hut since the school closed the afternoon before, and the first names following were those of the club members.

I remembered Surano's anger against Chumbo on account of his boat, and wondered if the fisher could have taken such an unjustifiable revenge. I was nervous and uneasy, wishing for James to come, yet dreading his appearance.

"The Surano boys live nearest to Chumbo; they might tell when they saw him last," suggested Audley Norris.

Mr. Weston called them in from the playground and put the question. They tried to remember, but failed. Juan thought he had seen the old Indian after they returned from school, but Gines said he was on the sandhill playing, and he did not see him.

"Where was your father last evening?" asked Mr. Weston.

Gines replied without the least hesitation, "He was out in Silvio's boat. They went over to fish near the island, and came back very late."

"Then it could not have been he, for the explosion occurred shortly after dark."

One of the smaller boys called out, "Here comes James Finney! Terry Law says he was over to Chumbo's last night."

"Come here, Terence," said Mr. Weston quickly, and he smiled at me significantly, as much as to say, "Now we are getting the real culprit," for he remembered James as the torment of the school, and was not disposed to believe in him under any other character.

Terry Law was very reluctant to appear

as a witness against James. He came forward much against his will, and replied evasively to Mr. Weston's questions.

The principal grew angry: "What do you mean, Terence? Answer me directly: did you see James Finney near the laguna last night?"

"No, sir—not near the laguna."

"Where did you see him? You have just told the boys that you saw him over near the Indian's hut, and I insist that you answer me at once, and truly."

Just at that moment James entered the school-room. It was fully time for the opening exercises, but this investigation delayed them.

Mr. Weston saw the boy, and turned upon him suddenly: "Come here, James Finney, and tell us where you were between the hours of four and nine yesterday afternoon."

James disliked Mr. Weston, and at his sharp, severe tone all the sullen, malicious spirit of the past seemed to revive. His brow lowered, and in a dogged tone he answered,

"I was minding my business—at work, helping Mr. Fayot."

"Julius Fayot, come here," cried Mr. Weston; and as the boy appeared he said gravely, "Now listen, and be sure you answer correctly: when did James Finney leave your father's green-house yesterday afternoon?"

Julius was a slow, methodical sort of boy; he took quite a little time to think, and having assured himself that he was correct in his remembering, answered, "He went away before six, because he said he had an errand to go; he told father he would stay longer to-night to make up for it."

"Now, Terence, you may as well tell the truth," said Mr. Weston; "and, James, I advise you seriously not to add falsehood to your other fault."

James looked wrathfully all around; not a trace of his late gentleness remained in his disturbed countenance.

"Are you trying to corner me because poor Chumbo's hut is burnt down?" he asked angrily. "Do you suppose I would do anything to hurt him or his place?"

"Terence Law thought he saw you in the neighborhood. Prove that you were not there, and the suspicion will be removed," I said.

"I cannot prove it, for I was there," said James sullenly, after a silence of a minute or two. "But I did not go to do any one any harm, and no one can show that I did."

"Come," said Mr. Weston decidedly, "that settles the matter, and takes the stigma off the rest of the school. You can come into my room at noon, James, and give me a full explanation of this affair. If it is satisfactory, no one can be more ready than I to exonerate you. If, on the contrary, I find you in fault, it will end your connection with the Laguna School."

CHAPTER VIII.

THE ACCUSATION.

“Iniquities prevail against me.”—Ps. lxv. 3.

I HAD been so exultant over James's reformation, I had gone to Mr. Fayot's with Mrs. Norris to procure him employment there, and so unhesitatingly pledged myself for his good behavior, so many weeks had passed without any backsliding on his part, that I had become perfectly secure in my confidence, and awoke with a shock to the painful doubt suggested by his returning scowl and the admission that he had been at the laguna last night. Suspicion was distressingly confirmed by my meeting him that very morning with a bundle under his arm and an unmistakable disposition to avoid recognition.

The lessons did not go easily that forenoon. The disposition to whisper over Chumbo's

disappearance and the destruction of his hut was too strong to be withstood by the smaller boys; and although the older ones were particularly quiet, and even appeared awestruck by the occurrence of the morning, they could not concentrate their attention on their books, and answered at random when I questioned them in their studies.

James sat with his head bent over his slate and his arithmetic before him, but I was not surprised to see that no results followed this appearance of study. I did not chide him for idleness when his class was called, nor did I think it best to interfere with Mr. Weston's plan. I could therefore only wait until recess-time, hoping, without much assurance, that he could justify himself to the principal.

The great reason for my uneasiness lay in James's passion for wealth, and the belief which he shared with the rest of the scholars as to Chumbo's treasures. He had got the Indian into trouble on account of Surano's boat, and they might have quarreled in consequence. Chumbo was in the habit of absenting himself on wandering tours, and a

few months ago it would have been quite in character for Batters to have destroyed his shelter and dug up the earth for spoils.

I thought I had implicitly believed in his reformation, but now that a doubt was suggested I felt there was more hope than assurance in the feeling.

James did not go toward the door of Mr. Weston's room when the scholars ran out to play. He remained in his seat with the same sullen, downcast air he had worn all the morning, until a summons came from the principal; then he sprang up in a desperate way and dashed out of the school-room and out of the playground.

Then Mr. Weston came in himself. "That boy's conduct convicts him," he said. "He is suspended from the school, and if no satisfactory explanation is produced I will make it a final expulsion. Ever since I came to the Laguna School he has been a drawback to the good character and success of the institution, and I have come to the conclusion that his presence injures the others, without conferring any benefit on himself."

Just then the chief members of the club

rushed in, betraying great excitement, and declaring that their box of balls and bats had been broken to pieces and the contents carried off.

“Batters did it, Mr. Weston,” cried Egbert Hyde, apparently very eager to create a commotion. “He said he would do something to us boys to be revenged for our ball’s breaking his stick-fence. Frank Blaine heard him; so did Sam McCook and Audley Norris, and they cannot deny it.”

“I heard him say he would teach you to behave properly, but I know he never meant to take your balls. He told Mrs. Norris he intended to try and be honest in every way since he learned what honesty meant.” Samuel McCook said this with a flushed face and ardent manner. He seemed greatly roused, and quite unshaken in his faith in James.

“Every one in the valley knows that he steals, and is not ashamed of it,” said Edward Morley. “He is not a fit associate for *decent* boys.”

Edward placed provoking emphasis on the adjective, and Samuel’s spirit rose. “But he

was always fit for decent boys to provoke and insult, it seems," he said angrily. "I have seen you and the Hunters and Egbert Hyde try to make him savage, so that you might complain of him."

"Come! come! none of this!" cried Mr. Weston, interrupting the boys. "We want no side quarrels or personal feeling. The boy is either guilty or innocent, and we must try to prove which it is, and act accordingly. He has run away—which is a bad sign to begin with—and so we must carry on this investigation without his help, and report to his father. Did any one here see James Finney this morning before school-hours?"

Mr. Weston looked around upon the group, and then turned his eyes toward me.

I was forced to answer, much against my will, that I did, and to detail how I had met him on the road with a package in his arms.

Egbert Hyde was apparently delighted to hear this. "He carried off our balls and bats and sold them, boys," he cried; "our Effie saw him have money in his hand—quite a good deal of it, too—this morning before school."

Audley and Frank seemed as much depressed as the club-boys were elated at these discoveries. When Mr. Weston asked if any one else had seen James have money, it became very evident that Frank had, from his changing color; and when pressed with questions he was forced to acknowledge that James had shown it to him with a triumphant air, without saying where he got it or for what purpose he meant to use it.

Recess-time being over, Mr. Weston called several of the boys into his own room, and told me he would make a regular statement of the case from such evidence as he could collect, and make its result a final decision as regarded James's continuing a member of the school.

I begged him to remember the late good behavior of the boy and the prejudice of his accusers, saying all I could in his favor, until I saw I was rather annoying Mr. Weston by what he called my "unaccountable partiality."

"You are the principal witness against the lad yourself, Miss Herbert," he said; "you met him this morning running along

the road from the school at an unusual hour with a suspicious package, and, as you have said, he rather avoided you and gave no explanation of his errand."

I was forced to acknowledge that this was true, and content myself to remain silent until I could see James and hear the truth from him.

Before I went to Mr. Finney's, however, I made up my mind to have a talk with Egbert Hyde, who was James's greatest enemy in the school. I saw those who had acted as his friends were greatly depressed, and I noticed too that Terence Law appeared very anxious to say anything he could in favor of James, although he used to be his antagonist.

I purposely lingered till all the boys had left the vicinity at the close of school, but going out I found Terry lingering too, and spoke to him about James and the Indian.

Terence lived over toward the sandhills, and I thought he might have seen something that had not yet been brought to light; so I asked him if he thought James and Chumbo had been good friends.

"Yes, Batters liked the Indian, and they used to divide anything they got together. I know Chumbo was angry about the leaky boat, and one night I heard him tell Batters that Michael Surano came and threatened him, saying that he would burn his hut down if he did not pay him for its loss."

"Did any one else hear Surano say this, Terry?"

"No, ma'am, but I told Egbert Hyde about it, and he says that all the boys knew Surano meant to do it."

"But Surano was out fishing," I said.

"Yes, ma'am, that is what they say, and they think he put Batters up to doing it while he was away, so that he would not be suspected, and that they then dug up Chumbo's money and shared it. Effie Hyde saw Batters have some."

"But that was in notes, Terence—small notes of currency; and if Chumbo has any treasure it is not in that form."

But Terence seemed to think that all money was alike, and I had some difficulty in convincing him that a buried note would not remain valuable long.

I saw that the other boys had been impressing him with their opinions against James, and that he was almost persuaded, though unwillingly, to believe him guilty.

"I wish I had not seen him last night," he said; "I can't bear to say anything against a boy when he is away; and he didn't want to be seen. He tried hard to get out of sight when I came up and found him whispering to Michael Surano."

I felt I must try and find James Finney at once; everything seemed to go against him, and there was nothing to be said in his favor.

Terence walked along with me. He seemed anxious to help James's cause, and I begged him not to condemn his schoolmate unheard. When we came to the spot where our roads divided, I repeated my desire that he would do all he could to prevent groundless prejudice from taking possession of the boys' minds, and he promised very generously to do his best.

"I never could agree with Batters—he had too much fight in him—but lately he has acted so differently that I was getting

to like him. He tried to do right, and it was hard for him to stick to it, with all the boys so down on him. I told Egbert so just now," he said.

When we parted I went directly to Egbert's house, and found him in the front garden training half a dozen boys in military tactics, as he had seen his father's officers do at the fort.

He did not seem very eager to accept my invitation to walk with me, but Edward Morley took his place as drill-sergeant at my suggestion, and he came with me down the road.

"Egbert," I said gravely when we were out of sight and hearing of the rest, "I think you are not sorry to prove that James Finney blew up Chumbo's house and carried off your bats and balls. Why do you dislike the boy so much? and why do you wish to see him punished?"

He grew confused at these pointed questions, and stammered something about not liking to mix with roughs and the school being disgraced with such low boys.

"But you do not want to drive a boy

who is trying to do right back to the bad habits from which he has endeavored to escape? Your good father teaches you a different principle, I am sure, Egbert, and unless you explain to me your reason for this persecution I must appeal to him on the subject."

He looked alarmed, and hastened to say in a contradictory way that he did not hate Batters; it was Batters who hated him, and that all the boys in the city grammar schools made fun of the Laguna boys for being mixed up with scavengers and ragged fellows. He repeated two or three times that he had never put on airs because his father was an officer, as Batters said he did, and he never cared about being captain of the school till Batters declared he would thrash every boy who voted for him.

"Who told you all these disagreeable things about James?"

"Oh, Ned Morley heard him call out that, and plenty more on the parade-ground, when all our school was organizing for procession and most of the boys had said I should be captain, only Batters set them

all against me, and they elected Audley Norris."

"Since then you have cherished an angry feeling against him?"

"Oh, I didn't care; I never took any notice of such a boy—he's too low."

Egbert said this with an affectation of contempt, which made me feel very sorry for him. He was a remarkably handsome, quick-witted boy, and his playmates had flattered a naturally conceited temper into a vain, tyrannical one. I understood now the motive of his organizing the club, which was to drive Batters out of all their plays, and I began to suspect that this selfish dislike was unscrupulous enough to carry him beyond the truth.

"You went into Mr. Weston's room to-day as a witness, Egbert," I said with great seriousness. "You had confessed that you knew nothing about the destruction of the Indian's hut and the loss of your balls, and how then could you give any evidence in the matter?"

"Why, Miss Herbert, the boys told me they saw Batters hanging round, and Dicky

Law says his big cousin, that works on the fort-road, knows he stole our balls and bats."

"But that is not evidence; no one should be a witness and pledge his word for anything he has not known or seen."

Egbert hung back and looked uncomfortable; he did not enjoy this interview.

"I want to warn you, my dear boy," I said kindly, "that this is a serious business; it involves the good name of a fellow-creature, and if you are unjust or untrue you do him an injury you cannot easily repair. So I hope you will be very careful in what you say to Mr. Weston, as well as to the other boys. I may find it necessary to call your good father's attention to the case."

At my last words Egbert changed color in a manner that was very apparent. He seemed really frightened, and even murmured an entreaty to the effect that I would not trouble his father about the matter.

"He is so—so strict and—and cross," faltered Egbert. "I will not mention another word about Batters if you will please not speak to papa."

I said "Good-bye" without promising anything. I had discovered that Master Egbert was a coward and that he knew he had not been doing right—two important facts in James's case as it stood.

CHAPTER IX.

SURANO'S BOAT.

“There ariseth light in the darkness.”—Ps. cxii. 4.

JAMES was not at home. They knew nothing about him there, and supposed that he had been at school, as usual, all day.

Kitty answered my inquiries, and I found her more subdued and thoughtful than she had seemed on my former visits. She had heard nothing of the difficulty at the school-house, and began to praise James in his new character.

“You have made a great change in our Jim, Miss Herbert. Even father notices it, and he seldom pays any attention to anything in the family. The neighbors say they guess you must have put a spell on him to keep him so good and quiet.”

I told her it was not I who deserved the

praise—that the greater part of it was due to his own determination—but that Samuel McCook had been the one first to awaken a good feeling in his breast, and showed him an example which he had tried to follow.

“But Jim says it is you, Miss Herbert. He says you have showed the boys how to treat him, and that the first day you entered the school you stopped the abuse and insults he used to receive. You may give the credit to whom you please, but Jim gives it all to you.”

I did not try to argue Kitty out of her mistake. It made me very happy to feel that James regarded me with affection, even if he overvalued the result of the interest I had always felt in him. My present object was to find him, however, and I asked Kitty if there was any place he was likely to go to besides Mr. Fayot’s green-house.

“Not in the afternoon. He does morning work for Mr. Parrish now, and that is what we all wonder at: he used to be the laziest creature that ever drew breath. Mother could not get him to bring an armful of wood or carry a bucket of water; and now

he is up long before any of us, and off attending to business. Even the turkeys notice it, for they used to run at the sight of him ; and now he feeds them to pay me for hearing him his lessons.”

“ Is not your mother very glad to see him so good and industrious ? ”

“ Oh yes, she likes it well enough. But, you see, mother has got into a habit of scolding, because father leaves it all to her to do, unless he gets awful mad ; then he makes things fly. So she takes very little notice of what is being done till she gets through with her regular fretting. Jim has worried her into the habit, and she cannot get over it.”

I asked Kitty if she thought James would be likely to go on the water again.

“ Not he ! ” she cried, laughing. “ That was the biggest scare of his life ; he will not be in a hurry to try it again. He says he saw death looking at him just as if it had been a real thing with eyes, and it started him to praying for God to have mercy on him. Mrs. Norris got him to tell her about that night, and she says it is something he ought never to forget.”

Mrs Finney had been to the city making purchases, and now she appeared at the gate, tired and heated with her long walk.

"If Jim had been at the short cut to meet me I need not have been dragged to death," she said, "but Jim would rather work for a stranger than his own mother, any day."

"Don't be down on Jim, mother," said Kitty. "He knew nothing about your going to town, for he hasn't been home yet. Here is Miss Herbert inquiring about him now."

"He seems bent on working his life out, Miss Herbert," said his mother, turning to me. "He does not get home till dark any night, and then he learns his lessons till nearly bed-time. As for the morning, he is up and away before it is light, and I am sure I don't know what the boy means by making such a slave of himself."

I said she must feel delighted at the blessed change that had taken place in his mind and habits.

"Oh, Jim was always a good boy, though sometimes he went a little wild," she returned, apparently forgetting all about her late tirades against him; "but his father ob-

jects to his slaving as he does, since it will not be long until we get our rights from the law, and then we will be as rich as our neighbors."

When I left the Finneys' gate I was more than ever impressed in James's favor. All I had heard served to convince me of the difficulties in the way of his being good, and to confirm the belief that he had conquered most of them. But when I reached Mr. Fayot's, and found that he had not been there, and met Frank Blaine and Samuel returning from an unsuccessful search for him, I scarcely knew what to think.

Frank said he believed he would be back in the morning, because it was only anger at Mr. Weston's suspicions that had made him run away.

"He has been trying to be a good boy, Miss Herbert," he continued, "and it makes him feel so badly to be unjustly accused."

I saw that both Frank and Samuel, however depressed by appearances, firmly believed in their friend's innocence. So I said nothing to remind them of Terence's story or my meeting him in the road that

morning, and left them going over the sand-hills to where the hut of Chumbo had stood, to see if they could gain any clue to his hiding-place.

Their hope and mine was doomed to disappointment. The morrow came and brought no tidings of either Chumbo or James. Mr. Weston showed me a paper addressed to James's father, in which was written his son's formal expulsion from school, and the causes were all set down in order.

Egbert Hyde was his principal accuser, but all his club had subscribed to what he said against him. He was called riotous, malicious and not trustworthy, and proven to have been three times suspended for these faults. His presence in the school was stated to be decidedly detrimental to the morality and advancement of the rest of the boys.

I begged the principal to allow me to keep this document until James's return, saying that the last charge made against him had really not been proven. But Mr. Weston replied that his absenting himself was a tacit admission of guilt, as every opportunity to exonerate himself had been given him, and

that as hypocrisy was the only fault he had not practiced before, and he was just about to introduce it into his career, he considered it absolutely necessary to cut it short in the Laguna School.

Of course I said that I was convinced James's reformation was sincere, and gave every proof I could produce to uphold my assertion. But Mr. Weston only asked me to account for his late conduct, which I was totally unable to do; and then he said the boy had been acting a hypocritical part lately, and deceived me, and even Mr. Harris and his good family, by it.

Still, I pleaded so hard that the dismission was not sent to Mr. Finney, and Mr. Weston promised to wait until I either saw or heard from James.

In the afternoon I noticed a dark-faced man with long black hair lounging round the yard and peeping into the window. Catching my eye, he retired in some confusion; so I went out to speak to him, and found him rather anxious to avoid me, as he tried to get out of the gate before I could reach him.

Finding escape not practical, he turned round and said in Spanish that he "only wanted to see Batters, to give him his change."

Something in the man's face seemed familiar to me, and when he smiled I saw that he was Juan Surano's father, he looked so like Juan.

"James Finney is not in school," I said.
"I wish you could tell me where he is."

He looked surprised, and shook his head gravely:

"Maybe he go to find Chumbo?"

"Do you know where he went?"

"No, no; I sail in the boat, go catch fish, when bad boys blow up Chumbo's house."

"Do you sail in Silvio's boat?"

"No, no; I buy a new boat—not very new, but very good. Captain Blaine tell me where to buy it. I work very hard to make money, and Batters pay me some."

I caught at this with great interest, and asked him when James had given him the money. He answered at once that he had come over the hills just after six o'clock the night of Chumbo's disappearance; that he

was just going off to fish with Silvio, and so he had taken the money and put it in his wallet. The next morning he went to Captain Blaine to ask advice on the subject of the boat, and, finding the good gentleman friendly, had told him all about James working for money to pay the cost of the old one. The captain said the boy was an honest fellow, and made Surano promise to give him back two dollars of the money, and used his influence to get him the boat cheap on condition that he did so.

Juan told him that James was absent the day before, and he had come to-day expecting to find him at school, and that was why he peeped in the window.

He was so anxious to get rid of the two dollars that he forced it on me to keep for James, explaining that he was going to get Captain Blaine's wagon to carry home his boat from the boatyard, and that he wanted to say he had paid back the money to satisfy the captain.

I asked him where Chumbo would be likely to go, and if he could guess who it was that destroyed his hut.

He seemed to have no doubt on the latter point, and, nodding his head in the direction of the school-room, answered, "Your bad boys."

In regard to Chumbo's present place of concealment, he gave it as his opinion that the poor Indian was hiding somewhere in fear, as my "bad boys" made him very timid by their wicked tricks.

At first I thought that I would go directly to Mr. Weston with this explanation of James's presence in the neighborhood of Chumbo's hut; but as I re-entered the school-room I detected Egbert Hyde and Richard Hunter whispering together with looks of anxiety, and even alarm. I therefore determined to keep my discovery until I had questioned these two boys alone.

I called Richard to my desk as the rest were being dismissed, and kept him there until all were gone. Then I asked him if he knew that any of the boys had designs against Chumbo—if he had ever heard them say they meant to drive him off; and I looked at him steadily as I spoke, for I recalled the conversation I had overheard

through the school-window the day the club was proposed.

"No, ma'am," said Richard, but he did not look at me. He fidgeted and kept his eyes wandering round the room, and at last muttered something about "Egbert Hyde and the other boys."

"Because, Richard," I said, "I overheard you say it would be fun to drive the poor Indian away, and I would rather you told me the truth about it of your own free will than to wait until it was found out and you were convicted of it."

He grew redder every moment, and kept repeating the names of the other boys and looking toward the playground where they were.

"Will you answer me a question truly, Richard?" I asked seriously.

"Yes, ma'am," he said with hesitation.

"Well, then, tell me: were you not at Chumbo's hut the day it was blown up?"

"No, indeed," he replied eagerly—"no, indeed. I never went near it, and I can prove it, too."

He went on to recite with great volubility

the number of places he had been, naming different boys who could give their words of honor that they saw him, etc.

I was convinced from his manner that he was telling the truth—in words at least—but I by no means acquitted him of intentional reservation in the matter.

Jenny Ware's mother came into the school-room just then, and I sent Richard out. He seemed very glad to go, and Mrs. Ware told me she had come to inquire about James—that Jenny had heard from Sarah Crofton all the trouble that had occurred, and the poor child had become so restless and unhappy that she was forced to satisfy her by coming to see about it.

She had another errand: Miss Esther Blaine had sent her a beautifully-ornamented sponge-cake for Jenny's birthday, which would be on the next day, and she desired to have me come and cut it for her. Sarah Crofton, Bessie Parrish and Effie Hyde were to be there too. The clergyman's granddaughters were to dress a little table with flowers, and make Jenny's last birthday a pleasant one.

Poor Mrs. Ware's tears flowed freely as she spoke of her fading little daughter. She was sad, but not hopeless, for the dear child knew she would never see another birthday here, and looked forward hopefully to the blessed home where they count not by years or months.

She had grown very fond of James Finney since the day when he came to tell her mother she was not in fault for the injury Sarah Crofton had received, and to take upon himself the whole blame of that occurrence.

"She used to be so much afraid of him that she would not start for school when she saw him on the road," said Mrs. Ware. "She would run back all of a tremble, and hide her head inside the door till he had passed by. But now she is more interested in him than in any of the others, and since the trouble here she has been restless and unhappy. But oh, how she has prayed for him!"

I told Mrs. Ware all I could of the favorable view of the affair, and found her as much of an advocate for James as Jenny

herself. She grew very much excited when I said I regretted that Mr. Weston looked on James's late improvement as a piece of hypocrisy, and declared that he never did do the poor fellow justice since he had the misfortune to upset an inkstand over a yearly school-report and spoil it, giving the principal all the work of drafting another.

“ Any other boy would have said it was an accident, and begged his teacher's pardon. But it was when Miss Gordon was here, and she thought James was the worst boy alive, and kept telling him so all the time, until I believe he tried to act up to it. Not a word would he say when the accident was found out, but just looked sullen and scowled. So Mr. Weston suspended him for malicious behavior. The neighbors suffered for it, for he took his revenge in just tormenting the whole valley.”

“ Was there no one to take an interest in him, and find out the real truth of the matter ?”

“ No ; he was such a disagreeable-looking boy that no one cared to meddle with him. Frank Blaine and he got into a quarrel one

day, and Batters knocked Frank down. He is a weak boy, you know, and the fall stunned him, so that he appeared dead. This frightened Batters terribly. They were alone at the time, and Mrs. Blaine was alarmed to see her son carried into the house in the arms of his enemy in an insensible condition. After that he could not do enough to prove his sorrow for hurting him; and then some of the valley-people began to see that he was not so fearfully wicked as he was represented. Frank did a great deal for him, but he is a delicate boy and half the time confined to the house from illness; so he could not be the constant friend that Samuel McCook and Audley Norris have lately proved."

Mrs. Ware had got upon an interesting subject, but she checked herself here, and said she must hurry back to Jenny, as Bessie Parrish, who was staying with her, would be tired of waiting.

She took some flowers from the little plot that Samuel still faithfully attended for his absent friend, and said Jenny would love to see something from the dear old playground, where she could never come again. The

ready tears gathered in her eyes at the thought, but the faith that sustained her lifted them to the pure blue sky of evening, and she smiled ; for she knew Jenny's future home would be better and brighter than the poor one she left behind.

CHAPTER X.

THE CONSPIRACY.

"All thy children shall be taught of the Lord."—ISA. liv. 13.

MR. HARRIS came to the school next day, for the first time since I had been there. He appeared to have merely called as a visitor, but I felt convinced that his coming had another object.

He spoke to the scholars in his kind, fatherly way, noting the improvement he saw in many cases, and encouraging and commending them in all good progress.

Then, becoming more serious, he alluded to their responsibilities toward each other, even in the simplest affairs of life. He spoke of the playground as a field of truth and honor or a scene of duplicity and unkindness, and made it a much more serious thing to be unjust or cruel, "only in fun," than

our boys had ever thought it. I saw that the earnestness with which he spoke and the pointed manner in which he addressed them had a decided effect on the members of the Laguna Club. Even a casual observer could have separated the boys who belonged to that body from those who did not, by the way in which they received the minister's remarks. Every one of them knew and respected Mr. Harris, and all listened to his words with attention. But there was a personal application to some that caused them to feel and appear uneasy and depressed; and this was as it should be.

Suddenly he changed from an exhortation to truth and justice in spite of cowardice and false shame, and began to tell them about dear little Jenny Ware's fading life, and how beautifully it was going out in peace and faith.

She had been a good and innocent little girl, not remarkable in any way for superior brightness or merit in school, but now that she had come down to the gates of death to learn, by pain and fear, the way to a saving and delivering Lord, she shone with the su-

perior wisdom that only such experience can bestow, and to be with her was to learn of Jesus and his love for children's souls.

Mr. Harris's object was to impress the minds of his hearers with the necessity of living well that they might die well, and his description of a sick bed, where the actions of a thoughtless life pass in review before dying eyes, was so true and real that Sarah Crofton's cheeks were wet with tears, and she whispered to me as I stood near her, "Oh, Miss Herbert, I mean to try and be good; I do, indeed."

The clergyman's eye was on our clock; when the hour of dismission came he closed, and I saw with satisfaction that he had made a very deep impression on those he particularly meant to reach.

He remained behind to give me his reason for speaking as he had done. "I am convinced that Edward Morley and the Hunters know something of this," he said; "and I think the best way is to induce them to speak from the pricking of their consciences. Last night Richard Hunter and Edward walked past my study-window two or three

times in earnest conversation, and my daughter heard them say they had rather be turned out of school themselves than feel as they would if Batters should be expelled. James Finney's father has lost his title-suit against the Morleys, and he is consequently in a very unreasonable and bitter temper. He has been to me, and threatens loudly about his son being persecuted and driven away by a combination of the aristocratic scholars; and it was to save you and Mr. Weston trouble by proving that there was no truth in the accusation that first roused my attention to the affair. Of course I would have been anxious for the boy's welfare, but I thought he was off on one of his usual adventures, and knew nothing about his being accused as the perpetrator of such a serious misdemeanor."

I asked him what he meant to do in regard to the two boys.

"Wait," he said—"watch them closely, and wait till I see some further developments. I hope to hear from one or the other to-night, and they shall not have far to go to find me."

He talked further about James's and the

Indian's disappearance, but as we could only surmise the cause we came back to Jenny and her birthday. The child was dying of consumption in a slow and almost painless way, her chief difficulty being attacks of weakness and sinking that at times simulated death. Her mother's poverty had been greatly relieved by the kindness of her church friends, and the attentions of the scholars to Jenny enabled Mrs. Ware to work at the sewing Mrs. McBride continued to share with her. At the little gathering the next day Mr. Harris was to be present and preside, but he did not consider it necessary to make it an occasion of gloom or sorrow. He thought the young should be reminded that death did not always seek the aged; but he believed that it could be better done by raising their thoughts heavenward than by lowering them into the gloom of the grave.

Whilst we were still conversing Effie Hyde ran in with a flushed and excited face. She did not see Mr. Harris, but came up to me in a breathless state, exclaiming, "Oh, dear Miss Herbert, we have found out who

fired poor Chumbo's hut and caused all the trouble. It was Peter Riker, the soldier who stays at the arsenal. He is drunk now, and he acts dreadfully, but I am sure he is sober enough to tell the truth, and he looks as if he knew what he was saying."

"Where is he?" asked the minister; and Effie, who was at first startled to find that he was a witness of her excitement, gladly seized on his presence as an aid to discovery.

"Oh, if you would only come with me, sir," she cried, "you could make him tell you everything. He says now that he did it to oblige some boys who were wicked enough to pay him for it. But he does not tell their names; only he says—just think, Miss Herbert, how cruel it was of them!—that they wanted the blame to fall on James Finney, so as to get him turned out of school."

Then, remembering the minister's question, she told us that the soldier was "just out there," pointing to a clump of trees bordering the road; and Mr. Harris, taking up his hat, begged me to wait his return.

He came back presently, followed by a stupid, swaying sort of figure which I recog-

nized as that of a soldier I had seen at Colonel Hyde's sometimes in passing.

Mr. Harris's very grave manner had partly sobered him, but he looked confused and muttered some inarticulate words about "not intruding on a lady," and begged that no harm should come out of "a bit of fun."

"This man tells me that he was hired by a party of the Laguna boys to wile Chumbo away from his hut on some pretence or other, and then to strew gunpowder around inside and set fire to it, they promising him that the blame should rest on James Finney, who was an outlaw and a disgrace to the school, whose interests would be served by thus getting rid of him."

"You see," broke in Riker with an unsteady bow, "I was out of sorts on account of losing nearly all my month's pay because of a little row I had with a comrade, and Master Egbert gave me a good big drink to start me, which made me feel bold as a Turk, and I agreed to do anything they would ask of me."

"Egbert?" said Effie in a tone of wonder — "not our Egbert?"

“Yes, indeed, Miss Effie; he was the one that made the bargain, and the Hunters and Master Ned Morley and all the rest joined in. They were to pay me five dollars for my trouble just as soon as the job was done. But when I went down to get the money they pretended they never sent me to do it; and so this morning I climbed the fence here and took off their balls and bats to pay them for deceiving me.”

“Oh, Peter, do not say my brother told you to do such a wicked thing!” moaned little Effie in great distress.

“I will swear to it if you do not believe me,” persisted the soldier.—“And now he will not speak to me, but threatens to report me to his father. So I take the matter beforehand and report myself.”

I had earnestly longed to clear my accused scholar of the cloud that rested on him, but when I saw the poor sister’s grief at discovering her brother’s wickedness I could not rejoice. My heart was sore with sorrow for the dear, good child, so bowed with the knowledge of a wrong she had never suspected.

"You must go with me to your officer, Peter, and make this statement in his presence, and produce what proofs you can of its truth," said Mr. Harris.

Either his drunken state prevented his realizing the position in which he placed himself, or else his desire to punish Egbert was stronger than his fears for himself, for he seemed very eager to go.

As soon as Effie and I were left alone together I attempted to console her, though I really did not know how to do it.

She controlled her weeping with more courage than I could have expected from such a gentle little creature, and said, "Please come to our house, Miss Herbert. I want to see Egbert, and if he really did such a dreadful, dreadful thing I want to give him an opportunity to repent and bear his punishment as he should. Oh, it seems too shocking, that my brother should try to injure a poor Indian, and get an innocent boy blamed for it!"

As we went out of the door I saw a bundle of bats and a coarse canvas bag filled with balls lying there. Peter had evidently

brought them back, and we locked them in the school-closet.

Egbert Hyde and Edward Morley stood at the garden-gate; they were talking together, with signs of perturbation on their countenances, but they separated just as we came up.

“Stop, Edward,” I said as he was moving off; “I have news for you: I have found your balls and bats.”

“Did Batters come back, Miss Herbert?” he cried, getting excited.

“No; it was Peter Riker, the soldier from the arsenal, who brought them to the school.”

The boys exchanged rapid glances and grew very pale, but neither of them spoke.

I was determined to force them into a confession if they were guilty; so I continued: “He has gone to his captain’s quarters with Mr. Harris to make a statement that will clear the mystery of the burning of Chumbo’s hut and take suspicion off James Finney.”

Not a word did Egbert utter. His face changed from dead white to scarlet, then it

grew ghastly with fear again, but his lips never opened, and poor Effie, who watched him with intense eagerness, burst into a torrent of disappointed tears.

Edward Morley had from the first stood a picture of distress and uncertainty. He cast imploring looks at Egbert, and then tried to speak, but his tongue seemed to refuse obedience to his will. At length he broke out, just as Effie gave way to tears, saying passionately, "I don't care if you do call me a sneak, Egbert Hyde; I am not going to tell on any one but myself, and I don't want to bring any one else into trouble.—Dick Hunter and I went in for fun, and so did the other boys, but ever since we had to sign that paper in Mr. Weston's room we have felt that it was a serious business, and we have been sick of it. We tried to see Mr. Harris last night, and we meant to take the whole blame on ourselves, and when he talked to us in school to-day we could scarcely sit still in our seats. Now I have heard that Peter Riker's going to tell the truth, I mean to tell it too. I want to be pun-

ished ; I am willing to bear it, and I hope I will get it ; for I told Peter to blow up Chumbo's house, and I meant to let the blame fall on Batters. But I really did think he stole our balls and things."

"Now you have done it!" cried Egbert, with an attempt at a sneer. But he was too much afraid and too miserable to carry out his air of bravado, and so he broke down with a groan and a sort of howl that any one who thinks it "good fun" to try to injure another should have heard.

Colonel Hyde appeared at his hall-door, and seemed greatly surprised at the scene being enacted in his garden.

He begged me to walk in, but I felt that his dear little daughter could better explain the painful circumstances to him alone. I therefore took my leave as quickly as I could, drawing Edward Morley with me.

When we were clear of the house I told him he had made a late acknowledgment of a great wrong, but that it was better than none, and that it was now his duty to do all in his power to repair the injury he had helped to inflict.

“Some one,” I said, “must see Mr. Weston and make the matter clear to him. If I had been mixed up in such a wretched business, I would rather make any humiliating confession than increase the sin by longer concealment.”

“Yes, ma’am ; but I don’t like to go and tell him when the other boys are away. The Hunters and Harry Crofton and some of the rest started as soon as school was out, and they said they would find Batters and bring him back, and make him all right, if they could. The moment they come back we will go together.”

“I am glad that conscience has something to do with righting the wrong,” I said fervently, “and I trust in God that it will be the means of keeping such disgraceful occurrences out of our school-history in future.”

CHAPTER XI.

JENNY'S BIRTHDAY.

“So teach us to number our days.”—Ps. xc. 12.

THE next day being Friday, our dismission-hour came earlier than usual, and I had promised Mrs. Ware to go directly from the school to her house. It was a busy day too, as it was our custom to review our weekly lessons in the forenoon, and in the short afternoon session to distribute reports and enjoy reading exercises.

Effie Hyde's seat was vacant, and so was her brother's, but all the other club-boys were present. I found a note on my desk from Mr. Weston, saying that from disclosures made to him late the evening before he had found reason to change his opinion of James Finney, and he should therefore take an early opportunity to establish the boy's

character in a different light in the presence of his schoolmates.

Harry Crofton had something of his sister's excitability of temperament, and found it impossible to wait until the time for recess to communicate something that kept his eyes dilating and his face twitching to disclose. "Teacher, Batters was out at the Mission taking care of Chumbo, who got hurt when his hut was burnt," he said in a sudden burst of confidence that upset interest in the lesson and the discipline of the class.

"Who told you?" "Where is he?" "Who found him?" were questions asked all at once. Finding it impossible to control the feeling that prompted them until it as well as my own strong interest was satisfied, I begged Harry to tell what he knew of the matter.

"Colonel Hyde found him," said Harry. "He had been away from home, and did not know about Batters being lost until Egbert told him. Then he got a horse and rode to the Mission, where an Indian doctor lived; for he said Chumbo would go to him if he

was in trouble, and he felt certain that Batters had gone to search for Chumbo. The Indian doctor had gone to Mariposa to get herbs, but his house was there, and he found Chumbo in it, lying very sick, and Batters waiting on him with all the kindness he could."

Harry made a pause here, and looked round on the boys with an uncomfortable sort of hesitation before beginning again. Edward Morley, with a broken voice and a changing color, gave him leave to "Go right on and tell the whole of it." Then he continued: "Chumbo was in the hut asleep, though every one thought he was out in the tule. So he got burnt and hurt, and frightened nearly to death. He told Colonel Hyde that he thought it was the bad Spirit come after him, and he wanted a charm to keep him off. He therefore went all the way to the medicine-man, as he calls the doctor at the Mission. When he arrived there and found him gone, his burns were so dreadful that he could not bear them, and he just lay down in the soft mud of the Mission Creek, where Batters found him."

This was all the information Harry could give. But it was sufficient to create a strong feeling in the school, and I am sure that every boy who had started and carried out the plan of driving off the harmless old Indian was heartily ashamed of the act, and anxious to prove his sorrow by any personal act of penance or self-sacrifice that could be suggested to him.

There was one thing I was very glad to know also, and that was, that although Egbert Hyde was their leader and the only one of them who cherished anything more than a general dislike and objection to James Finney as a vulgar and unattractive boy, still, none of them made any effort to take shelter behind his deeper fault or attribute the blame of their wrong-doing to his evil example or persuasions.

They were thoughtless lads, rather than wicked ones, and the consequences of their foolish combination so far surpassed the feeling that prompted it that they were completely humbled by remorse and alarm.

Samuel McCook and Audley Norris pleased me greatly by their course toward the fallen

party. Not an exultant look nor a taunting word did they or their followers offer, though they had received many while they were hopelessly supporting poor James's cause and everything seemed against it.

Terry Law and his boys had remained perfectly neutral, except Terry's own compulsory evidence, which the elder Surano had explained, and which Terry appeared very happy to know was thus rendered in James's favor. The effect of what had been told in the school was first observable in him that afternoon in the playground. I stood by the window and overheard some of the boys shout, "Come on, Captain Terry, and start the game, or the club-boys will get ahead of us."

He was talking to Edward Morley, and the two boys came down the yard together.

"We are done trying to put on airs about such things," said Edward, "and I have asked Terry to join in our game."

"I am willing, and I'm not any boy's captain any more," said Terry; "let every one do right and play fair, and we will all be equal. There was too much jealousy of each

other in the Laguna School; that is what made the trouble."

Having arrived at this conclusion, they joined in a game together, and apparently enjoyed very greatly their coalition.

I did not know what Mr. Weston's course toward the boys engaged in "the plot" would be, but I felt that any interference on my part would seem out of place, as he had undertaken to punish the offenders against the peace and good order of the school, whoever they might prove to be. He did not come into my room that day, and not an effort was made to impose any greater correction on the offenders than the consciousness of their own fault, which had the effect of keeping them quite subdued and quiet.

I feared the pleasure of our meeting at little Jenny's bedside would be marred by Effie Hyde's absence. But she was there when I arrived, and said she had suffered with a headache all the morning, or she would have been at school as usual. She was naturally such a bright-spirited, happy creature that any shadow showed itself plainly on her sunny face. Still, she was

not so sad as I had dreaded to find her, and she alluded to her brother in a grave, quiet way that proved to me his faults had been under careful family examination.

"Papa wants to see you about Egbert, Miss Herbert," she said. "He hopes he can induce you to forgive him and give him an opportunity to regain what he has lost."

Seeing that I looked toward Jenny, she added, "Jenny knows about it. It was not fair to let her have any doubts about James, who has given her his promise that he will try to become a Christian, so as to meet her in heaven."

"I think Egbert will be a better boy after this," said Jenny with her sweet, wise smile. "It seems to me that we can all go sliding along smoothly in the wrong way, and never think where we are going or what the end will be. But when we are stopped in some sudden manner it sets us thinking and frightens us, as that fall into the bay at night did poor James. He says he could only have been in the water a minute or two, but he cannot tell all the

thoughts he had ; they crowded themselves into his mind so quickly that it seemed as if he had lived a year in the very jaws of death."

"Jenny believes that everybody will get good by and by," said Effie, smiling ; "she never despairs at all."

"How could I, with such a ready Saviour and such unmeasured love?" said Jenny. "It only seems like yesterday that I used to be playing over there under the trees, and never thinking at all about anything but the day's work or fun. I hated James Finney then, and I did not believe a boy with such an ugly face could ever get to heaven if he tried ; and I thought Effie Hyde could easily be an angel, because her hair was so long and shining. Now I think so differently ! It seems as if the months on this bed had been years and years, and I know now that God loves James, and sent his Son to die for him just as much as for the handsomest prince in the world, and that such boys as he was make joy in heaven when they repent."

"But I don't believe Batters is just as

good as he can be yet, for he gets angry. He became angry and ran out of school when Mr. Weston accused him of doing wrong," said Sarah Crofton, with a wisely dubious air.

"He will have to keep getting better and better, and repent over every wrong thing he does," said Jenny. "St. Peter repented after he had denied our Lord, and he was forgiven too."

"I will tell our Egbert of that," said Effie eagerly. "He is beginning to be good, I know, for he is very wretched, and says there is no use of his trying to be any better, since he is the worst boy that ever lived in the world."

"Mr. Harris will tell him who died for the chief of sinners, and make him understand it hopefully," said Jenny with animation. "How beautiful it is to give hope and comfort to people's souls when their bodies are wasting away and forsaking them!"

She lifted her thin little hands and smiled at their shadowy outline. Her near approach to death seemed to give her no uneasiness. "Perfect love casteth out fear."

The arrival of Miss Esther Blaine and the most of the girls of her class was soon followed by the appearance of the clergyman and his daughter. Mrs. Ware's cottage was nearly full of guests, and their gifts were all such as could be appreciated by the good woman. Pretty flowers and delicate fruits were spread before the invalid. Just as Mr. Harris was about to offer up a prayer of thanks and praise James Finney appeared in the doorway; Mr. Weston came with him.

The principal apologized for what he feared might seem an intrusion, but he said he had been very anxious to see the sick scholar; and calling on James, and finding him inclined to go, they had concluded to come together; so here they were.

James had lost some of his ruddy color, and his face had gained a gentler look than it had seemed capable of expressing on my first knowledge of him. His clothing was neat, and of a much better style and quality than his usual dress. This was owing, as I may as well explain here, to Colonel Hyde's generosity and sorrow for his son's misdeeds taking that expression to begin with.



Jennie's Birthday.

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"I have asked James to pardon my unjust suspicions, and offered him my hand in friendship for the future," said Mr. Weston with warmth and frankness.

James was not yet sufficiently at ease to express himself as he felt. Still, he said he was obliged to him, and gave an almost inaudible pledge to do his duty in the future. As soon as Jenny stretched her hands out to him he ran to her side with a happy smile that lighted his plain face and made it almost comely.

She began to question him eagerly, and from his replies we learned that he had been overwhelmed by the weight of evidence that appeared against him, and was utterly unable to stand up and face it without some defence. He knew that he had been seen at the Indian's hut that evening, and that I had met him very early in the morning on the road.

I interrupted him to ask why he had not instantly explained the circumstance.

"Nobody would have believed me: Mr. Weston was down on me anyhow, and he would have called it hypocrisy."

"There, my boy! we will begin on a new page," said the teacher. "You have shown me that you can reform, though I said you could not, and I am ready to believe you for the future."

"But where were you going with the bundle, James?" I asked.

"It was a package of newspapers, Miss Herbert. When you told me I ought to work for money to pay Michael Surano for his boat, I went to Mr. Parrish and asked him if he would let me carry 'round papers for him. He had no place for me then, but the next week he sprained his ankle, and then he took me to help him. The morning I met you I had to go out to his house for the key of his store, which he had forgotten, and he made me promise I would not stop or speak to a soul till I got back, he was in such a hurry for it."

James then proceeded with his story by saying that he had been sure that Chumbo had carried off the boys' balls, to be revenged for the loss of his hut; and so he went straight after him to get them and make the Indian acknowledge the theft.

He sought him in the tule about half a mile below the school, where he knew he had a favorite haunt. Not finding him there, he was about to return and brave his fate when he remembered To-ke-no-chim, the medicine Indian at the Mission, where Chumbo had said he would go to be cured of his pain.

Arrived there, he saw the miserable Digger stretched in the creek mud, suffering from burns and bruises; and so he stayed to nurse him till Colonel Hyde's kindness moved Chumbo to better quarters and gained for him a surgeon's care.

Mr. Harris had listened most attentively to this account, and now, at Jenny's request, he prayed with a thankful heart, and we all joined him to bless the dear Father who will not quench smoking flax, but fans it till it glows in a flame of true heavenly grace.

We were not very merry, but we were a happy and deeply-interested and grateful party; and Jenny smiled on us all till her watchful mother detected signs of weariness on her sweet face. Then we bade her goodbye and parted, well satisfied with our afternoon and its events.

CHAPTER XII.

THE END OF THE TERM.

"He that humbleth himself shall be exalted."—LUKE xviii. 14.

OUR summer term would close in the middle of the following week, and somehow I scarcely expected to see the leader of the Laguna Club back in his place on Monday. I was therefore somewhat surprised to find Colonel Hyde and his son waiting for me when I entered the school-room. Egbert looked like a boy who had passed through a serious experience in the interval that had elapsed since I saw him in his own garden. He was no hero, and I suspected that fear of the consequences entailed by his evil actions had a good deal to do with his depression. At the same time, the shock of detection and exposure had certainly awakened his dormant conscience and caused him to feel both remorse and shame.

"My son has come to plead for the privilege of remaining in the Laguna School, that he may try and retrieve his character, Miss Herbert," said the colonel gravely. "He is too thoroughly ashamed to be able to express himself very clearly just yet, but I know he is humbly anxious to gain your forgiveness too, if he can."

Egbert raised his eyes covertly to my face at this, but dropped them instantly and murmured something about not deserving to be forgiven.

I think the best lesson ever given us on the subject of forgiveness is the example of the Prodigal's father, who saw his son afar off and ran to meet him, and fell on his neck. Therefore I was not slow to respond to even these faint words. But my assurance only seemed to increase Egbert's wretchedness. He dropped into his seat and covered his face with his hands in a hopeless, heartsick manner.

"I do not know from which my son suffers most, his throes of pride or stings of conscience, but I am determined that justice shall be done in either case, and that he

shall acknowledge, in the presence of those schoolmates who heard James Finney accused of destroying the Indian's hut, that he was the prompter of that malicious act, and that he could, by speaking out and confessing the sin, have spared the innocent boy much suffering and the teachers great uneasiness and some unjust conclusions."

Egbert seemed to writhe under the necessity of this public reparation. But his father's authority was not to be disputed. As soon as the scholars had taken their seats the colonel asked their attention to what his son had to say to them.

The boy's struggle was pitiable. His former pride of position, and the almost tyrannical exactions he had demanded of the rest, made this humiliation doubly painful. I saw that he had endured a home-struggle and conquered the evil in his nature so far as to bow his spirit before God and his family; but the tempter's voice was whispering to him now, and the same evil counsel that had led him to act a lie still endeavored to withhold him from speaking the truth.

But there was a better element in Egbert,

that asserted itself after lying dormant so long. His face wrought painfully, and his varying color fled in the effort, but it triumphed at last, and he broke out in a desperate sort of way: "Boys, I am ashamed of behaving as I did to Jim Finney. It was a mean, bad feeling that made me call him a disgrace to the school, in place of trying to make him a credit to it, as Sam McCook and Frank and Audley have done. If you all turn against me and never speak to me again, I will not blame you, for I think I deserve it." Then he told them what most of them already knew, about his share in the destruction of the hut.

There was a murmur among the club-boys, and Richard Hunter and his brother half rose, as if to speak, when Edward Morley jumped up and said he would not let Egbert Hyde bear the blame alone, and declared that he was just as guilty himself.

"And so am I," cried Harry Crofton; "I used to call names after Batters."

"And I too," called out a dozen voices.

"You have come before a merciful jury, Egbert," said his father. "Your teacher re-

ceives her erring scholar with affectionate words of counsel and encouragement, and your schoolmates strive to lessen and share your blame. It only remains for you to beg the great Judge whom you have most offended to forgive you, and to give you strength and wisdom to walk in a better way in future."

Just at that moment James came in. Mr. Weston had given him permission to be a little late on account of his serving the papers for Mr. Parrish, who had, on his return, entered into a regular weekly agreement with him for morning-work.

Colonel Hyde took his hand, and said in the presence of all the boys that he hoped to see him live to be a credit to the school and the neighborhood, and told him that he had acted with positive magnanimity toward his son in the unpleasant circumstances that had just transpired. Then the father took his leave, and I called the school to order, without adding a word to weaken the impression already made.

There were but two more school-days during that term, and they were spent, as I had

scarcely hoped to find the Laguna scholars capable of living, in perfect harmony. No word passed between James Finney and Egbert Hyde. Whether they purposely avoided each other or not, they did not come in contact. Indeed, James seemed to have awakened suddenly to a serious determination to study, which occupied him too completely to admit of much companionship. He stayed in the school-room at recess to ask me to mark lessons for the holidays, as he was anxious to go into the senior class at the next examination.

The rest of the boys seemed to follow his example; consequently, there was no gossiping nor dispute about what had happened, and a safe silence was preserved over the past on all sides. Mr. Weston was the only one to break it. He made a long speech to the scholars, detailing his past difficulties and the causes of his despondency in regard to the unity and progress of the school. He recalled so much that was painfully true that I was afraid James's scowl would return. But after this gloomy retrospect he emerged into a more hopeful vein, and declared that

he fully believed the institution to have entered on a new career, and that brighter days and happier results were before it.

I cannot quite remember to what causes Mr. Weston attributed these promising appearances—whether he viewed them as the results of his long and arduous efforts, or ascribed them to the effect of the development of circumstances. But I know that he seemed to rejoice, as we all did, and when he concluded by saying that he wiped off all recollections of the late misdemeanors on the part of lads who had shown an honorable spirit of penitence, there was not a cloud on the whole school.

When the closing day came we were all in great good-humor. As most young people love music and declamation, we had determined to give the afternoon session entirely to those exercises. There were a number of visitors present, and the singing and playing were really excellent. Effie asked me to have the windows opened that looked out on the green lying between Mrs. Ware's cottage and the school-house, hoping that the sweet sounds might reach Jenny's window.

Many of the boys really excelled in elocution, and yet not one of them allowed a smile to appear when James Finney for the first time read aloud a piece he had studied carefully with evident pride in his execution.

He had just concluded his rather laboriously-rendered poem, and Edward Morley had generously started a warm applause, when his little sister Nelly came running in at the door, dirty, uncombed and miserably clad. She held a great flapping sun-bonnet back to allow her to see the way to her brother, and, suddenly descrying him as he was about to descend from the platform, she rushed toward him, crying out,

“Oh, Jimmy, come home as fast as you can. The men brought pappy home, and he is dead, and mother is screaming.”

The other sister, Jane, had performed a like errand for poor Kitty, who, before her brother could fully understand the dreadful tidings, came dashing in, regardless of school-rules or the presence of strangers, and screaming piteously, “Oh Jim! Jim! father’s dead; somebody has killed him, and it must have been in a fight about the title.”

James Finney was over fourteen years of age, and in some things quite mature for his years, although in others—his school-education, for instance—he had made but little progress. But of late I had noticed a decided manliness about him, and it became creditably apparent when he recovered from the first shock of this unlooked-for blow. He stood for a moment as if quite stunned. Then he drew a long breath, the color forsook his cheeks and his eyes became suffused with tears. He took his little sister's hand and drew her to his side, quieting her in whispers, and addressed a few words to Kitty in the same low tone, which had the effect of subduing her transports of grief.

“May I go home at once, Miss Herbert?” he asked, turning to me.

“Of course, James, and I sincerely hope you will find Nelly has exaggerated the case in her fear and excitement.”

He did not reply, beyond a hopeless shake of the head, but he tried to quiet his two sisters, and drew them to his side in a protecting way, like one who felt it his duty to sustain and comfort them. He went out,

leaving us all impressed by the self-control and good sense his manner displayed.

Captain Blaine was one of our visitors, and he and Mr. Morley, after a word or two together, offered to go at once to the Finneys and see the extent of their misfortune, and what could be done for the family.

Captain Blaine was their nearest neighbor, and a proverbially kind-hearted and generous man. Mr. Morley had been forced into law with the Finneys, owing to Mr. Finney's passion for contesting land-titles, and the unfortunate man chose to look on him as his enemy because he had made him his antagonist.

Both gentlemen considered this a proper time to do away with all such impressions. They therefore made haste to offer their services in this day of need.

The consternation created by the Finney children was too great to admit of a quiet resuming of our exercises. The people dwelling in the vicinity of the laguna formed a little community of themselves, and their interests were strongly personal.

Mr. Finney had not been a popular member, but his children were growing up in their midst, and every one felt concerned for the fate of the family.

After a few words of injunction to the scholars to refrain from annoying the family by surrounding the house to gratify their curiosity, the reports were distributed, the lesson-prizes awarded, and the school quietly dismissed, the term ending with a very different climax for the Finney family from any we had expected.

CHAPTER XIII.

AFFLICION AND HELP.

“Call upon me in the day of trouble.”—Ps. 1. 15.

POOR little Nelly had been right in her report. Her father was indeed no more. But his death was referable to his own unwise habits, and not to any violence. He had been a pioneer in the land of gold, and, like many others, had wasted good opportunities in waiting for better; so that when at last he sent for his family to join him, he had no better home to give them than the shed he had put up for bachelor quarters on a strip of ground to which he held a doubtful Spanish title that was liable to be contested at any time.

By no means impressed with the dubiousness of his own claim, Mr. Finney—who for some time had indulged in drink and politics—began to believe that it gave him

a right to a far greater extent of property than that covered by his own homely establishment. Under this delusion he went to war with his neighbors on all sides, and spent time and money in trying to prove himself proprietor of a good portion of the Laguna land. The greater his legal experience was, the more he gave himself up to the influence of intoxication, so that he had at last become little better than a lunatic, wasting his substance under the spell of a double delusion.

He had finally adopted the idea that he and the members of his class were abused and downtrodden by the more fortunate members of society, and so exalted himself into a defender and orator of workingmen.

He was engaged on the day of his death in an excited speech to a small group of loungers, idle and worthless like himself. Having drunk more than usual, he wrought himself up to a terrible pitch of frenzy, denouncing his neighbors by name and using most abusive and profane language in connection with them. Suddenly he became inarticulate, and, after gasping and

struggling for breath, fell down in a violent fit. This was followed by insensibility, from which he never roused. And all this was the effect of idleness and habitual intoxication.

The house and family were miserable evidences of the falseness of his system. Neglect and disorder reigned everywhere, and claimed the younger children and their mother as victims. But James and his sister had of late really contrived to emerge from the wretched chaos, to assume a little better appearance, and to take a clearer and more sensible view of their situation.

When I got there, some time after school was dismissed, Kitty had already, with her brother's help, made an effort to produce a decent appearance in the main room, where the body was laid. A clean spread covered the bed, and the chairs were set in order around the walls. The table, that had always seemed to occupy the middle of the floor whenever I passed, was closed and put back, and Kitty had smoothed her mother's generally disordered hair, and induced her to put on a clean apron and neckerchief.

Mrs. Finney's grief was violent in its nature, and she had somehow contrived to lay the blame of her loss on her wealthy neighbors, and lamented her husband and reproached them in the same breath.

Mrs. Crofton came in while I was there; so did Miss Esther Blaine and Mrs. Harris. The poor widow renewed her lamentations at the arrival of each, saying that she had lost the best and kindest husband with whom a woman was ever blest, and that he was the victim of aristocratic tyrants, who would be satisfied now that he was gone and his helpless widow and children were left to starve.

The ladies tried in vain to calm and console her; and, finding their efforts useless, they turned their attention to more practical matters.

"I will get some clothes for Nelly and Jane," said Miss Esther. "I can easily alter my little sister's dresses to fit them until others are made; and I know Mrs. Norris has suits from the Sunday-school Aid Circle that will do for the two younger boys."

“Captain Blaine and Mr. Morley came and offered to take charge of father’s funeral,” said Kitty, weeping quietly. “Every one seems very kind to mother, and I am truly thankful to them all.”

“Yes,” said Mrs. Finney with a bitter groan, “it is very easy to be kind, now they have done their worst and we are thrown on the charity of the world without your father’s help or care. Poor, foolish young things that you are! You don’t know the loss which you have met, nor to what it has reduced you. If Dennis Finney had been spared, we would soon have been as well off as our neighbors. But now he has gone, and there is nothing left.”

I do not know from what principle Mrs. Finney reasoned, but she really seemed to believe what she said. If ever we had blamed her children for being obstinate, wicked or unreasonable, we saw now that they had some excuse in their example and training.

But the Laguna people took a good way to disprove her foolish words, and if possible convince her to the contrary of her mis-

taken ideas. However unpopular the Finneys had been in the past, they were now the recipients of nothing but kindness and attention. While I was there during the next day, helping Kitty in her efforts to tidy the house, almost every one in the valley came with offers of service or substantial evidences of sympathy.

Poor Kitty was very much sobered by the shock of her father's death. Her manner was subdued, and she showed both thoughtfulness and consideration toward her mother and the rest of the family. But her naturally aspiring tastes found real gratification in improving the poor place with such things as were furnished by the neighbors for that purpose. On the day of the funeral, when the children were all clean and decently dressed, and the house looked as it had never done before, both neat and comfortable, her grief certainly found a balm in her internal satisfaction, and I saw her look round with covert pride at her mother's suitable mourning-dress even while the tears flowed from her eyes.

Mr. Finney's ostensible business had been

an agency or two, out of which he managed to gather a small proportion of a living. But he also held a petty ward office, the reward of his political career. From this he contrived to get enough to keep him on good terms with the drinking-saloons and restaurants, leaving his family to do the best they could with their poultry and eggs, in the care of which Kitty was both expert and fortunate.

As Miss Blaine and Mrs. Harris took care of the family wardrobes, and Captain Blaine and Mr. Morley met the expenses of the funeral, the neighbors very readily supplied the household with food, and left them in a more comfortable condition than they had been for a long time.

But this was not enough, and from what I heard said among the gentlemen I felt convinced that they meditated conferring some permanent favor on the family, which some months before was considered a disgrace and annoyance to all the valley.

The day of the funeral had come, and as Mrs. Finney confined herself to wailings and regrets, the elder son and daughter were appealed to, and allowed almost entire manage-

ment of the solemn ceremony. They showed greater judgment and a finer sense of propriety than one could have expected under the circumstances, and respectfully combated their mother's desire to have a large and showy procession to follow their father to the grave.

The unhappy man's life had not offered a hopeful text for a funeral oration, as both of his children seemed to feel. They had therefore begged Mr. Harris simply to read the Scriptures and pray in the house and at the grave. This he did in a very solemn and impressive manner. Nearly all the people of the Laguna were there, and the kindness and attention shown by persons who had received many causes for anger and provocation from the deceased acted upon his children more powerfully than the most eloquent discourse could have done.

Miss Blaine and I went back to the house after the burial, and Kitty broke out in quite a passionate way as soon as we re-entered the door:

“I never, never can forget, while life is left me, how good everybody has been to us

all, and to our poor dead father too. I hope God will make me thankful and humble. I know Jim feels as I do, and that he has made up his mind to be kind and live in goodwill with all the world ; for I see you cannot love God right unless you do. That was poor father's trouble ; he tried to believe everybody wanted to put him down, and that as soon as people got anything that he had not, they despised him for being without it. Jim made the same mistake ; so did I ; and it kept us in constant misery. But we cannot believe such a wretched doctrine any more, when the very people father talked most against came and acted like forgiving Christians to him and us."

"That's true, Kitty," said James in a trembling voice. "They seem to treat us all the kinder because we are poor, and I believe they want to make us forget that father used to be quarreling with them all the time."

Even Mrs. Finney, contrary to my expectation, answered this by saying with a sigh, "Yes ; nobody can complain of the Laguna people in this respect. They have behaved better than I expected, I am sure."

She then proceeded to say that of course if she could get her rights she could pay back all that had been done for her, and, having got on this foolish strain, relapsed into speculating about the probabilities of such a desirable thing taking place.

“ Maybe, now that I am a widow, the court would do me justice,” she said, “ if we only had the ready capital to prosecute our claim.”

But I was thankful to see that such discourse had no effect on her son and daughter. They had suffered too much through such absurd pretensions, and were now determined to aspire to nothing they could not honestly claim.

“ Don’t talk of such things, mother,” cried Kitty with something of her old impatience of tone and manner; “ if it had not been for just such nonsense, we would not need to be cases of charity, and father would not be in his grave to-night.”

Mrs. Finney was, after all, a rather weak woman; finding that her old principles were no longer popular, and somehow realizing that her children were greater objects of in-

terest and sympathy than herself, she subsided with a sigh, and from that time forward seemed to yield her old views and ways to them.

We saw that they were all comfortably provided for that night, and left James and Kitty—the younger children having had supper and gone to bed—sitting together talking over their future prospects with their mother in a very sensible and dutiful way.

Miss Esther parted from me to go over to see little Jenny, whom she had been rather obliged to neglect for some days past, and I stopped in to talk with Mr. Fayot on the subject of his taking James to learn his business thoroughly, and thus securing the boy a good means of earning a living for the future.

But, to my disappointment, the florist did not seem to favor the plan. He said James did his duty very fairly when at work by the job; but his opinion of the lad's temperament and habits did not dispose him to think he would make a good apprentice to such a quiet business as gardening.

Mr. Fayot was devoted to his work, and

certainly better able to judge of James's fitness for it than I could be; but I felt greatly chagrined when I found that I could not prevail on him to take him into steady employment.

He still offered James work when he should need help in packing seeds or putting up roots and bulbs, but that was all, and I was forced to turn my hopes to something else.

By inquiring I heard of a place in a hardware house, and hastened to see the proprietors. They seemed to be kind gentlemen, but they wanted a young man for salesman who would be able by his manners and briskness to suit the trade.

James scarcely seemed suited for that; and I tried two or three other openings with a like result, not wishing to speak to him of any of them until I had some surety of their proving suitable.

At length I heard of a very good opening in a grain- and flour-store, and went at once, hoping to secure it.

There was but small pay offered at first, but the prospects were good, and I felt that

I might with propriety go out to the valley and tell James of this place.

Owing to the active interest I had taken in this way, I had not been able to see anything of the family since the night of the funeral, and I half expected to find the place relapsed into its old wretchedness of appearance and surroundings. But I was pleasantly disappointed to find it neater than ever. The younger children were playing in the dooryard, but it was no longer a mass of rubbish and dirt, with which their appearance well accorded. Everything looked as if it had been newly set in order, and a wooden paling ran along the end of the house, which secured the poultry in the back yard.

Kitty was just brushing up the floor after tea, and Mrs. Finney was at work—for the first time in my knowledge of her—sewing the “tailoring” which Mrs. McBride gave out to her deputies.

“I have persuaded mother to give up the housekeeping to me,” said Kitty in explanation. “She does not like it, and it sort of bothers her. Besides, she is a really beautiful sewer, and can get along finely on the

linen pants Mrs. McBride has given her to make up for the clothing-house for which she works."

"Yes, and Kitty helps me very nicely," said her mother, with her old pride in her favorite daughter. "Kitty is a neat sewer when she tries. All she needs is to settle her mind to anything, and then she is sure to do it well."

"Oh, I don't know about that, mother. There are plenty of things that I cannot do at all. But I guess I can learn dress-making if I try hard; and as I am over sixteen, and tall and strong for my age, I think I had better begin. Mrs. Norris says I could set up for myself in a couple of years or so, and that I would be sure to get custom out here in the valley. Miss Phillips would give me her extra work, and she always has more than she can possibly do."

"What an excellent plan, Kitty! I never thought of it before, but it seems the very thing."

"Yes, ma'am. It was Jim's idea; he seems to be quite a man now. He thinks of everything, and tells us all what to do."

"I have something for him which I hope will prove useful and suitable," I said, and was about to explain fully when Kitty, opening her eyes very wide, exclaimed, "Why, didn't you know, Miss Herbert, our Jim has gone into business? I thought every one knew it, but he has been so busy that he has not had time to go and tell you, I suppose."

As she was speaking James and his younger brother came in together.

There is nothing that so changes and improves any one as the feeling of being able to do something for the comfort and happiness of others. James had regularly entered life on his own account, and was now the head of his family and the one to whom they looked for help and support. He showed his consciousness of responsibility by a serious and modest demeanor, and approached me for the first time with a frank and pleasant air. He had always been respectful to me, but never without a certain reticence that was half shy, half sullen, which had now wholly disappeared.

I told him that I had come out to tell him

of a possible situation, but was happily disappointed to find him already in a place. He did not forget to thank me before he said that Mrs. Parrish's son had been very kind to him, and offered him a chance in the newspaper line, and that he had advised with his mother and Kitty about taking it; the only drawback being that he would have to work quite a long time to pay for the expense incurred at first starting.

Mr. Parrish had the agency of a number of leading papers, and had already established an excellent stand in a populous neighborhood. His proposition was to set James up in a branch store, with a good supply of the leading journals and periodicals and a route or two of daily papers attached, where, with care and attention, James could not fail to earn a good living, and likewise provide for his younger brothers, whose services could be made available in distributing the papers and helping about the shop.

The only drawback to this excellent plan was the expense, and this Mr. Parrish agreed to assume if he could hold the stock and ser-

vices of James and his brothers until it was repaid.

This was fair and just, but the Finneys could not live meantime on nothing. There were seven of them to be fed and clothed, and Kitty seemed energetically opposed to their ever returning to the old dirty, reckless and half-clothed style in which they had lived when they subsisted as best they could on the poultry-fund and chance help from their irresponsible father.

A generous relief from this difficulty was offered by the kind gentlemen of the valley, who called on Mrs. Finney the day after Mr. Parrish's proposal and gave her to understand that they desired to give her family some proof of their friendly consideration as old neighbors, and, hearing of James's opportunity to enter the newspaper line, would take pleasure in defraying all the expense of his shop-fixtures and stock in trade. They then presented her with a check for a hundred dollars, which they said was a personal gift, over and above their aid to her son.

Poor Mrs. Finney, who had not seen so

much money at once in many a day, thought herself very rich with such a sum, and expressed herself as very grateful.

James could hardly believe his senses when he heard from her of their good fortune, and the last cloud of his old life seemed to break and fade away at this instance of good feeling and confidence on the part of the people whom he used to consider his enemies.

He had gone at his work at once with astonishing energy, and when I heard the family account of what he had already accomplished, and with what decision and kindness he managed his little brothers and made them useful, I felt that Mr. Fayot was right when he said that a boy of James's temperament should be allowed to work out something for himself, and not be tied to a quiet routine, such as hot-house work would prove.

CHAPTER XIV.

CHUMBO'S INDEMNITY.

“Work and labor of love.”—HEB. vi. 10.

JENNY WARE still lingered, though she had grown so weak that she could only say a few words at a time to those who went to see her. But she had not lost her interest in her old favorite, and Mrs. Ware told me that to James's credit he never neglected to come over at least twice a week, let him be tired or not, after the store closed, to sit beside his “first friend,” as he called Jenny.

I heard something about Egbert Hyde that pleased me very much. His father had been doubling all the money Egbert saved, so that he might soon be able to buy a pony; but when the trouble about Chumbo's hut came to light, Colonel Hyde

stopped the gift and told his son he might do what he could with the money he already had to lessen the misery he had caused the poor Indian.

Poor Chumbo was a miserable creature; his residence in the fort hospital had benefited him in one way, by making him clean and comfortably clothed, but the poor fellow was old and his health was entirely ruined by his late mishaps. Rheumatism cramped his muscles, so that he could not walk without limping terribly; the burns were slow to heal; and he had a racking cough that made his old bones shake and his dim eyes water.

Egbert took counsel with his father, and decided to build Chumbo a weather-tight hut, where he could be comfortable in the approaching rainy season; and Effie, furthering this charitable plan, began to contrive many comforts which were kindly meant, though scarcely such as the poor savage could appreciate.

The fort carpenter began the construction of the hut at once, as the surveillance of hospital-life cramped and distressed Chum-

bo, and he fretted for freedom in the tule once more. The former club-boys spent the greater part of their holidays in improving the ground around this edifice, after taking great pride and care in helping its erection along.

A small stove and many unnecessary comforts were provided for Chumbo, whose wild life had not lent him the power of appreciating them. But not even the swamp or tule could deprive him of the sense of pleasure his queer old red face expressed at sight of their kind actions and efforts to please him when he was fully installed in his new home.

Young people of both sexes act so often under the spur of impulse, or from the contagion of example or suggestion, that we should be very discriminating in our condemnation of their faults, even when they seem flagrant. We should strive to detect how much is owing to the stress of circumstances and how much to innate evil before we pronounce our judgment.

These boys, who had so lately united to torment Chumbo and drive him from their

neighborhood, now, under the sway of a revulsion of feeling, could not do enough to comfort and cheer the suffering old man. They were actuated in this by strong remorse for their former cruelty and a generous determination to recompense him for his past troubles.

One day, while I was sitting at Jenny's bedside reading to her, Sarah Crofton ran in to tell us that Chumbo's hut was all complete, and that the boys had borrowed Captain Blaine's truck and put Chumbo's bright new scarlet blankets in it, and gone to give him a triumphal ride and procession to his hut.

I heard a great deal of hurrahing and cheering as they started off on their errand, and Jenny smiled and seemed very happy to know the valley was at peace and acting under kind feeling.

"None of the boys except the party who were to blame for the burning are there," said Sarah. "Our Harry says the boys made a promise that they would all spend every cent of their holiday-money on Chumbo, to make up for what they had done to frighten and worry him."

"He is not as well or strong as he used to be, is he, Miss Herbert?" asked Jenny.

"No, dear, I believe not. I think I heard Audley Norris say that the fort surgeon said he would never be well again."

Jenny looked thoughtful. "When I am gone," she said, "I trust the friends who have been so good to me will remember this poor Indian. I know he seems queer and silly, and talks about his black Spirit and the great dances of scalps and pipes that he will have when he dies. But I am sure he could be taught about the Saviour and the real heaven that he can reach through Christ's love; it is all so plain that he can understand it easily if any good soul will only be patient enough to teach him."

She was so earnest and pleading in this that I, feeling very timid of my own powers and distrustful of any success in such a solemn undertaking, was fain to promise that I would try.

"Oh, thank you!" cried Jenny with a reviving gleam of her old spirit; "you make me full of hope for Chumbo; and now I will beg Sammy and Audley and Frank to go

and read to him, as they sometimes do for me." She sank back exhausted, and closed her eyes a little while after this; so I shut my book and moved softly away, whispering to her mother that I thought she would sleep.

"No; she is praying for Chumbo," said Mrs. Ware. "There never was such a child to pray for people, and believe in the effect of prayer, as my Jenny. When she was a little creature she never saw a child or an animal in need of anything that she did not desire to divide her small portion with. 'If I give all I can, it will be just as much as if I could give more,' she would say; and now all she has are her prayers, so she gives them freely."

I left my little scholar with a pleasant sense of something gained; I always carried away that feeling from the dear child's presence, and I think the children who visited her shared the impression, for they all liked to go there, as if to a scene of delight rather than to the contemplation of a deathbed. Yet they were graver for these experiences. I could notice the feeling, like

a subtle and beautiful spell, restraining them from rough, wild pranks or boisterous tricks upon each other.

I wanted to stop a moment at Mrs. Parrish's to see Bessie and ask about James Finney's business. So I left the cottage and went over to the house nearest the school.

Mrs. Parrish was at work sewing, but Bessie had gone to Mrs. Harris's to attend a meeting of her class. During the holidays Miss Esther and she had agreed to take turns in having the girls assemble at their houses once a week and help their teachers to sew for the Sunday-school Aid Circle, that clothed needy scholars and fitted them to appear in the Sunday-school.

Mrs. Parrish's house had an air of comfort about it that told of her son's success before she confided to me how well he was doing in his business.

"The gentlemen gave him the money to invest for James," she continued; "for although the boy has shown wonderful spirit and judgment, he is only a boy, and needs guidance and advice from an older and more experienced person. So my William has

gone into partnership with him, as you may call it; that is, he helps him by buying for him and making his contracts, and seeing to his stock and all sorts of things."

"He is a very valuable friend," I said heartily.

"Oh, it is all in a business way, you know. They settle with each other regularly, and keep strict accounts; that is the way to be friends."

Quite a procession appeared in sight, and a joyous shout broke upon our ears at the same moment. We ran to the garden-gate as it came down the road, and beheld Chumbo, robed in his fine new blankets and crowned with three tall hats perched on top of one another and decked with flaunting feathers. He sat in state in the truck, and the boys had harnessed themselves to it to draw him to his new home.

The Surano boys had joined the procession, and they and Dicky Law and José Silvio were pushing the vehicle at the back, without occasioning any ill-will on the part of the other boys; which certainly was a noticeable concession, the "Greasers," as

they were derisively called, being hitherto regarded as pariahs by the Americans.

They were so exultant, pointing out to the Indian the splendors of his new mansion as it rose in sight on a little knoll on the end of Colonel Hyde's grounds, that they did not perceive our vicinity ; we remained quiet, and they passed by gayly till they reached the next turning, when I heard Edward Morley call back warningly,

“Hush, boys ! keep down your noise ! Jenny Ware's house is over there, and we may hurt her head hurrahing.”

“Are not the boys getting thoughtful ?” said Mrs. Parrish admiringly.

I assented with a deep sense of thankfulness and satisfaction.

CHAPTER XV.

JENNY'S REST.

"Our Saviour Jesus Christ hath abolished death."—2
TIM. i. 10.

ONCE more I was called to visit the Laguna Valley before I resumed my duties in school.

I had been absent from the city on a friendly visit for three or four days, and on my return I found a note waiting for me from Miss Esther. It contained only these words :

"DEAR MISS HERBERT:

"God has taken our little Jenny to his blessed rest. Her poor mother, who bore up so patiently and cheerfully, gave way completely under the long-looked-for blow, and is now inconsolable. Come as soon as possible. With love,

"ESTHER BLAINE."

It was dated the night after I left the city, and on inquiry I found that some one or other of my scholars had been there frequently during the two days following. The last was James Finney. He had called late the night before, and, hearing at what hour I was expected, left word for me to lose no time in reaching the valley, because Jenny was to be buried that day.

I therefore made all the haste I could, but when I turned down the school-house road I heard the sound of singing, sweet children's voices rising in tender melody in one of the simple hymns Jenny had loved so dearly. As I neared the house I distinguished the words:

“Jesus, blessed Saviour, hast thou died for me?
Make me very thankful in my heart to thee.”

Nearly all the scholars of both schools were assembled in the garden in front of Mrs. Ware's cottage, and their sweet singing was the last tribute they could pay their dear little friend.

Mr. Ware had come back from his place in the mines to be present at his daughter's

funeral and endeavor to comfort his heart-broken wife.

The poor woman had been able to control herself most unselfishly as long as the little sufferer was to be considered; but now that her sweet, hopeful eyes were closed for ever, the light seemed suddenly to go out of Mrs. Ware's life and all help to be withdrawn from her. She sat at the side of the coffin holding the tiny white hand tenaciously, as if dreading the moment when she would have to resign its touch. Next to her were two sincere, heartbroken mourners whose grief seemed to act like a balm on hers. James Finney and Sarah Crofton had been Jenny's closest companions; for them she had thought and prayed, and in their future had been the strongest faith of her fading life.

Looking at her now as she lay in soft white drapery that hid her wasted form, adorned with autumn flowers prodigally strewn around by loving young hands, which thus sought to express the affection of their saddened hearts, I felt that she had been a wonderful power for good in our small community—

that she who in her health had been a shy child, noticeable only for her timid, affectionate nature, had, when stricken by disease and loosened from the active interests of her age, proved a minister of grace to win all who came within her influence to higher, better thoughts and purer lives.

Everything that affection could do to soften grief had been done for Mrs. Ware. Miss Esther and the other Sunday-school teachers had spared her every care and carried out her wishes as if by instinct, and they and Mr. Harris united in the effort to draw her crushed heart heavenward, where the Hand that had afflicted was waiting to heal.

She did not rebel, but only lay prostrate and sorrowing at the outer side of the gate that had closed in her darling. She could not give cheerfully, but she never doubted the dear Saviour's love in asking.

"I am trying by his grace to learn to say, 'Thy will be done,'" she whispered to me as she clasped my hands in hers, "but the words will not come freely yet."

We buried our dear little girl in the mountain cemetery, where the great sea-

waves break far below and the soft murmur rises when the air is still like the melody of a song of peace.

The good clergyman, speaking from Jenny's last hours as a text, called upon the young to remember their Creator and turn their hearts to him, for his only Son had died that the sting might be taken from death and the horrors of the grave conquered to those who repented of their sins and clung to him as their Redeemer. He called on them all to acknowledge their utter helplessness and their need of a Saviour's love — to fly to his outstretched arms and cling to them always, for there is no other name under heaven by which we can be saved.

There was not one careless listener among the whole body of children present, and many were very deeply affected. I know that youth is fickle, and that the impressions of joy or sorrow seldom last; but the lessons then received into the pliant souls, though they may sink from sight and seem to be forgotten, are often revived in after years with a faithfulness that proves their retention. Besides, in the case of these children

the good teachers, who were deeply interested in their eternal welfare, were with them so constantly that they could and did fan the spark and cherish the flame until in many cases it resulted in sound conversion and the beautiful fruits of higher Christian life.

As we left the cemetery, James Finney walked at my side to the carriage.

"I am going to tell Chumbo all about Jenny's funeral," he said. "He can't go around now as he used to do, and he likes to listen. Poor fellow! he thinks the bad Spirit makes his bones ache, and he says if he had money he would buy him a gun and a blanket, and then he would let him alone."

I asked James if he knew how anxious dear Jenny was that the Indian should be taught to listen to the Bible and learn about Christ, and he said yes—that she had made him promise to go to his hut and read to him whenever he could spare the time. But he was very much afraid Chumbo never could be taught anything.

"He used to say the American God *could not be good*, or the American boys would be-

have better; and when a missionary came out to talk to him once, he ran away and hid in the tule, because he did not want to learn about the white man's religion."

James said this very hopelessly, but I reminded him that this was Chumbo's view of the Christian faith when he was suffering constant persecutions at the hands of its children, and that he judged it by its fruits. I said it was a solemn and awful thing to bring the religion of Christ into discredit in the eyes of heathen; and he seemed to feel that it was. What was better still, he took fresh spirit and determined to repeat to Chumbo all that Mrs. Norris had taught him.

But James was henceforth a young man of business, and his time for teaching was very limited. Our holidays were over, and the Laguna School reopened with two vacant places, to be filled no more by those who had once occupied them. Jane Ware had gone to a place in one of her Father's mansions above, and James Finney had gone out into the world to fight its battles in real earnest as the young head of his mother's family,

with the duties and responsibilities of manhood devolving on his shoulders.

It certainly was like looking at a transformation to observe him in his new character and remember what he had so lately been. Now his object was duty well performed, and a more industrious or energetic boy I never saw. Even after his day's work was over he found time to keep up the studies which I had marked out for him, and one or two evenings in the week he came to my house for assistance in his arithmetic, which was the branch he felt most interested in pursuing.

Mr. Ware took his wife back with him to the mines. The cottage had become so desolate that we all felt the change would be good for the bereaved mother. But before she went away she had conquered, through God's grace, the hopelessness of her grief, and, though sad, was not forsaken. A life new, and in many respects exciting, awaited her, and she felt that even her humble efforts might be for good in a mining-town with a slender female population and strong tendencies to gaming and reckless living on all

sides. We parted from her with tears and prayers, for her sorrow had drawn her close to the hearts of the Laguna people. But we all felt that a patient, loving worker like her would be blest wherever she went.

No one appeared to take the cottage; it was closed up, and the great geranium trees grew rank and the fuchsias flourished in the garden in the early rains. The school-girls used to go over there and bring me nosegays of "Jenny's flowers," as they called them. The place seemed sacred to the memory that had drawn their hearts around it.

But it was destined soon to receive new tenants.

Mrs. Finney sent her daughter Nelly for me one day in great haste as I was about to leave the school-house and drop in for my usual visit and attempt to read to Chumbo. So I accompanied the child (who told me she did not know the occasion of her mother's message) back to the house.

Kitty was sewing with Miss Phillips, she said, and her other sister had gone to live with the dressmaker entirely. "She gives her her clothes and boards her for picking

out bastings and running errands, and when she gets real smart she is going to teach her the trade," said Nelly, with evident pride in her sister's prospects. "Kitty gets time to help at home, and I keep house while she is gone," she continued.

She further informed me that Kitty's progress was so great that she "'most made a dress for Mrs. Crofton, only she did not fit it all, and Miss Phillips showed her how to do it."

When I heard this hopeful and encouraging account I had just reached the Finneys' dooryard, and found Mrs. Finney waiting for me with her old woe-begone confusion of manner.

"We are all ruined now, I suppose, Miss Herbert," she said mournfully. "I am sure I thought we had had every misfortune that could befall a family, but it seems there was another blow waiting."

With this introduction she acquainted me with the following facts: Mr. Finney had held a title to his place that had never been disputed, because no one had ever examined into it. His desire while living had been to

prove the flaws in other people's titles to their possessions, and so he had neglected to establish his own.

Captain Blaine had lately decided to build a larger and handsomer house, and after consulting some of his friends and neighbors he proposed to Mrs. Finney to buy her ground of her at a fair price. He and his friends represented to her that the interest of the money would far more than pay the rent of a comfortable dwelling, whilst their present quarters were not fit to encounter the rainy season without many repairs.

She acknowledged the truth of this, and saw that she could not sell at a better time. So, after taking James and Kitty into consultation, she consented and gave the captain her deed to examine.

Then it was ascertained that there was an old Spanish title existing which had been bought up in the case of Mr. Morley, whose property was purchased under the same conditions, but which Mr. Finney's want of prudence had allowed to lie unexamined and uncontested. This injured the

sale materially. Captain Blaine did not propose to pay a good price for a doubtful deed, and if this old claim should be instituted by its holder against the property the Finneys might at any moment be obliged to defend their right or leave the place.

"You were always our friend, Miss Herbert," said the poor woman, concluding this recital in a doleful voice. "You were the first to make the valley people see how they had misused us, and so I turn to you in my trouble. Poor James has been doing so well, and Kitty too is just as good and industrious as a girl can be. But this news will upset them all."

"Who is the holder of the claim?" I asked, simply because I did not know what else to say in a case so far removed from my knowledge or ability.

"Here is the name written out; I never could remember those Spanish words. He got a land-grant running down between Mr. McCook's place and the laguna, but sold off most of it to buyers and squatters for just what they would give him. It had no value then, and if Dennis Finney had ever taken

a thought for the interests of his family he would have bought the part of it we hold and saved us this trouble."

Mrs. Finney's affection was veering and uncertain. She had never endeavored to induce her husband to be wise or careful in his life, and now that the effect of his improvidence was irrevocable she blamed him.

I read the name on the paper two or three times. It was "Felipe Maria Nunes Alvarado," and being long and pretentious enough to remember, I felt sure I would not forget it.

"I will endeavor to find out where this man is," I said, "and then you can make up your mind what next to do."

It was plain to me that the poor woman suspected her good neighbors one moment and found fault with her dead husband the next; for she said she had not given Mr. Morley or Captain Blaine any satisfaction when they called. "How do I know but that it is a story got up to reduce the price of the place?" she said cunningly.

I paid no attention to such an insinuation,

but, leaving kind messages for the children, went away.

That very evening James came to me to say that his mother had told him about the deed, and that Kitty and he had resolved to rent the cottage Mrs. Ware had left and trust the Spanish claim to Providence.

“The cottage belongs to Mr. Hunter the banker, and he is a liberal gentleman. He is only going to make us pay half the rent until next spring, and that will not be as much as it would cost us to make our house weather-tight. He says to me, ‘You have just begun the world for yourself, Jim, and I’ll let you have a chance to try it fairly before I come down on you for full rent. You do not want charity, because you have a spirit above it, but you want fair dealing; and this is about fair, I think.’ Wasn’t he kind, Miss Herbert?”

“The whole valley seems full of kind people, James,” I said.

“That’s true: I never saw a place so changed in all my life,” answered James simply, not appearing to suspect where the change began. “So I came to tell you that

we will move right over to poor, dear Jenny's old house. Mrs. Parrish and Bessie are going to help mother to fix the place, and Kitty has a holiday too."

This is the way the cottage happened to get new tenants, and James fell heir to Jenny's garden and many pleasant remembrances of the dear child's presence.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE SPANISH TITLE.

“There ariseth light in the darkness.”—Ps. cxii. 4.

IT was quite easy to make an errand over to Silvio’s house; as he was the oldest Mexican in the vicinity, I went to him to inquire about “Felipe Maria Nunes Alvarado”—not with any decided hope of gaining information, but because it was necessary to begin somewhere, and this seemed a fair starting-point.

José was playing in a little hollow in the sand behind their shanty, and, taking my visit to himself, ran to meet me with the courtesy of a true Spaniard. He led me to where his father was calking his fishing-boat, and I found the elder Silvio an entirely different man from his neighbor Surano.

He was quite communicative and cheerful, and told me that he and his brother lived

there with their children, both being widowers. But by and by, when they had caught fish enough to make a fortune, they would go back to Mexico, where they would be among their own people.

He seemed to underrate the surrounding Spaniards, and told me they were all mixed with Indian blood, whilst he was a "pure Castilian."

I asked incidentally at this point if he had ever known a man of the name of Felipe Maria Nunes Alvarado. He laughed and pointed up to where the rain-washed ruin of Chumbo's hut still stood.

"He died here with that old grasshopper, Chumbo," he said. "He was no true Spaniard, or he would never have lived like a Digger dog."

"Was he Chumbo's friend?" I inquired very eagerly.

"Oh, yes. They were drinking together always until Felipe grew too ill; then he wanted a padre, but he threw his money all away in bad wine, and could buy no mass. Ah, he was a bad fellow, a grasshopper like Chumbo—no better."



Miss Herbert's Visit to Chumbo's Hut.

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I had often visited the Indian, but without feeling that my efforts to read and talk to him made any progress. I always found him lying in his blankets near the door of his dirty hut, and I had to overcome a foolish repugnance before I could stop with him and speak to him.

He was well cared for now, and always told me that he had plenty of food, and only desired respite from the cramping pains he suffered in his limbs.

Having mentioned this once to Mr. Harris, he said he would carry him a bottle of liniment that would relieve the acute rheumatism, and he promised to see him as frequently as he could when I told him how vain my efforts were to interest him in Bible reading.

He had been there the afternoon on which I met Silvio, and as I came back from the laguna after some further talk with my Spanish friend, I stopped at Chumbo's door to ask if the liniment was successful.

Chumbo was seated on the floor of his hut chuckling to himself in a very curious manner. In one hand he held a small,

plainly-bound Bible, in the other a bottle of medicine.

"Very good charm," said he, grinning at me as I entered. "Me dig him down by'me by, put him in the ground and make my house all well."

At first I could not understand his idea, but after some expressive gestures I comprehended that Chumbo was trying to adapt religion and science to his own superstition.

The liniment had relieved him, and the Bible, as he had observed, was regarded by us as a sacred object; so he wished to combine them into a charm and bury them under his house-floor to preserve his health.

I spent some time in uselessly arguing and explaining the fallacy of such a plan, and then I said he must not cut up his nice new floor.

At this he laughed, and, lifting three boards in the form of a trap-door, showed me the sand and earth disturbed beneath, and a modern japanned box protruding from the hole.

"Me old charm no good now; me throw away."

I sprang forward, crying, "Oh let me see that box, please, Chumbo!" with all the anxious eagerness I felt.

He pulled it up, grinning and mumbling over it. I found that it was battered and defaced by rough usage, so that I could hardly loosen the hasp that held it closed.

Chumbo watched me narrowly. "No good charm?" he asked. "Bad Spirit say no good."

"I do not know yet," I answered. "Let me see what this paper is. Why, it is a deed, Chumbo—a land-deed made out in the name of a Spaniard. You must not bury this; it is too good."

"Too good? worth money? much money to buy blankets and a gun?"

"Yes, yes, certainly. Will you let me take it and show it to Captain Blaine?"

In my excitement I had already started, but Chumbo shuffled along and laid hold of my dress.

Taking the deed out of my hand decidedly, he placed it in the box, closed it and put it behind him, telling me to "go 'way."

"All white men cheat Indians," he said

sententiously, "This is Felipe's charm; no good to bury, but very good to sell for money. All right!"

So I was forced to retire with the important knowledge that the deed for the Spanish claim on the Finneys' property was in Chumbo's possession, and that he would sell it to any one who gave him a gun and blankets with which to propitiate his evil genius, who he thought had afflicted him with rheumatism.

I went directly to the clergyman with the story, and saw him start over to Captain Blaine's before I left.

The kind minister was so highly pleased to think that the Finneys had no more arbitrary enemy than poor Chumbo that I took courage about it and felt that I must have exaggerated the danger. I did not wait to hear the result of their interview, but Caroline Harris brought me a note from her grandfather the next day, saying that Captain Blaine and Colonel Hyde had seen Chumbo and had offered to buy the japanned box from him at what the Indian considered a most generous price for an old charm; but that he, Mr. Harris, disapproved of taking

advantage of the Indian's superstition. He had therefore begged them to remain satisfied with Chumbo's solemn promise that he would sell it to no one, and allow the charm system to rest a while till the clergyman tried the effect of medicine on his suffering limbs.

So the deed was safe, as the minister said ; and yet he advised that James should know nothing of it for the present.

The family moved ; Mrs. Parrish and Kitty did wonders in putting the new house in order, and the Finneys enjoyed a pleasant home for the first time in many years. The generosity of the neighbors had given them many comforts at the time of the funeral ; others were added now. Having the loose boards and the lumber from the old sheds, James hired a carpenter to build a good house for the poultry and fence off a large place separate from the house-garden, where they could scratch in the sand and dirt, and Nelly could feed and care for them nicely.

What a change ! The old Finney corner, with its dirty sheds and tumbledown fences, its host of ill-kept, fighting children and

animals, and the squalid misery revealed by the open door, had disappeared. The lot was cleared, and the rest of the old lumber and shedding sold to pay the expense of moving and buy the necessary additions to their household furniture. The new abode was as tidy as Kitty's newly-wakened energy and love of home could make it; while James and the boys found time to weed and beautify the garden, although the town work kept them busy all day till nearly sundown.

"You could not keep that boy Batters out of mischief if you tied him hands and feet," one of the valley people had said to me a year before when I was endeavoring to persuade her that he would improve as his reason developed; and when I saw how much his industry accomplished, and how hard and energetically he worked, I did not wonder that his ceaseless efforts were so much dreaded when they only tended to mischief.

Mr. Harris never saw me without commenting on the happy change, and Samuel and Audley, who had entered the senior class, often came in at recess to speak about

James's nice store and his promising career as a "business-man" of little over fifteen years old.

The boys did not neglect Chumbo. He told me his rheumatism was all right now—that Mr. Harris's charm had wrought wonders. Then he would laugh and rap on his floor with a stick, saying, "Very good charm, Felipe's; no good for leg-pains, but good for money."

I found that he was very uncommunicative about the box, however, never naming it to any one but Mr. Harris and me, and especially anxious to preserve it a profound secret from James and the other boys.

There had been no bargain concluded between Mrs. Finney and Captain Blaine, whose plan for building had been deferred by a voyage to China, from which he had not yet returned.

Spring had come again, and as I always attended the Valley Sunday-school, and had now a class of my own there, I missed James Finney one Sunday from his place in Mrs. Norris's circle of boys for the first time since he had joined it. Kitty was in Mrs. Harris's

row of girls as usual, and as soon as school closed I went over to inquire about him.

“Poor Chumbo is very ill,” said Kitty. “Last night he sent James to Mr. Harris to beg him to come and baptize him; and this morning Miss Esther went and stayed with him till near Sunday-school time; and then Mr. Harris really did baptize him. Just think, Miss Herbert! poor Indian Chumbo is baptized! I don’t believe he can be a real Christian, do you?”

“I do not know, dear, but I am sure Mr. Harris must have known, or he would not have received him in the name of the dear Lord, who says, ‘Him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out.’” I said this with a humble sense of my own inefficiency and the ease with which I had been discouraged at first about Chumbo.

“Oh yes, I know that beautiful verse, but it seems so strange; and Effie Hyde says that his name is James now. He chose that name on account of liking our Jim so much; and he said he wanted to go to the white boys’ heaven, because they were all good and kind now.”

“Let us go and see the poor Indian, Kitty,” said I; and we started together toward the hut. We were joined on the way by Miss Esther, who seemed to me to be the ministering angel of the valley.

We found him breathing with a marked effort, but he knew us and said with a smile, “Me James now, like Batters. Your God my God, and his Son, Great Medicine Spirit, heal me by’mee by. I believe him! I believe him!”

Then he looked at me with a peculiar smile, and said, “No more charm there.” He pointed to the old spot in the floor; then putting his hand on his breast he said, “God put a charm here to make Indian believe.”

He had a very good mattress on which to lie, and everything around him that sickness could require. James sat at his side, and a grief that few could understand was marked upon his countenance; for this poor savage had been a friend when there was none to pity or sympathize with him among the Christians who rated him the worst boy in the Laguna district.

The clergyman and one or two others

came in presently, and Chumbo, looking round, seemed to have expected them, for he smiled and said, "All right!" in his peculiar way.

He tried to raise himself, but he was too weak. James anticipated his wish, and lifted him a little, so that he could get at something he had concealed under his head. It was the japanned box.

"Not good for charm," he repeated, "but very good for money. Felipe die; then he got no child and he give me. I die; I got one child, James; I give this to him. Me James too."

He placed, or rather tried to place, the box in James's hands, who took it, seeing his wish, with a look of wonder on his face.

In this manner he received, unknown to himself, the deed of the Spanish grant. What appeared mysterious might have been known by any one who remembered back a half dozen years, as I afterward heard. For the drunken Felipe used to wander round trying to sell his title—which was then considered worthless, being uncon-

firmed—for a bottle of brandy at a wine-shop.

Poor Chumbo died that night. Having constituted James his heir, his mind seemed at peace. As his reason could not comprehend the full glory of the faith he had received, so his soul never doubted it, but rested in perfect trust till the last faint struggle carried him over the dark river, where, as we believe, his red skin and meagre faculties could not weigh against his penitence and faith.

In the school-house yard a new class of boys play; the old set is promoted or gone out into the world. But the little corner known still as “Batters’s garden” has its flowers duly watered from the great butt near which it lies.

James, like others, has met the changes and trials of business-life, and tasted in his small way the sweetness of success and the bitterness of disappointment. But, in the main, he has been very prosperous, and, what is better still, he has always tried to be good.

Thinking it over, I am led to wonder to what we should really attribute the great change that took place in the "worst boy." The kindness of friends, Jenny's prayers and teachings, his sight of sudden death and the Indian's curious friendship,—all pass in review, but do not quite answer the question. The only true response must come in the words "God's grace and mercy," and to him and his Son be all the glory!

THE END.

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